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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The Trail of Roses

By Edmund Condon

WATCH FOR "THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE" IN OUR NEXT NUMBER!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE TRAIL OF THE ROSES

A DETECTIVE STORY OF KEEN INTEREST

By EDMUND CONDON

CHAPTER ONE

"THE VISITOR IN TEARS"

"GOODNESS! Another abduction!"

Ruth Raven stared at the morning newspaper in astonishment, as she read the large headlines:

"MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE—Georgette LeVere, chorus girl at the Gayety Theater, missing for over a week," etc.

She let the newspaper fall mechanically from her hand, as her mind went back to the two previous affairs of the same nature. Yes, it was strange, even she, one of the most noted detectives in New York, thoroughly accustomed to the unusual, was forced to admit. The other two victims had both been shopgirls. One had left home to go to work one morning, failing to reach her destination, and had never been heard of since. The other had gone out to lunch at the usual hour—and never returned.

"There is something back of all this," thought Ruth; "I wouldn't be surprised if the three abductions were engineered by the same hand."

She arose and, crossing the room, looked out into the street. It was a perfect spring morning, and every one seemed to be taking advantage of the delightful weather.

"Much too nice to be in," thought she. "I think I'll motor through the park."

She was quite an important personage, this little woman of twenty-eight, and was already one of the most successful detectives in the metropolis. Her appearance was deceptive—she looked extremely youthful—certainly not more than twenty-three. She was rather under the medium height, and had a very attractive face—not distinctly pretty—her firm little chin was a trifle too prominent, and her forehead a trifle too high and broad to conform with mere beauty's laws. Still, she had an extremely

animated and pleasant expression, and had really beautiful large black eyes, which, with her jet-black hair and brilliant coloring, gave her a very uncommon appearance.

She occupied a small but lavishly furnished apartment in West Fifty-eighth street, and her living-room, in which she was now resting, was very cozy, with heavy Persian rugs, rich tapestries, victrola and grand piano, for Ruth was an amateur singer and musician of considerable ability.

She was about to ring for Rosie, her one servant, when the doorbell was rung violently several times. Before any one could answer the door was suddenly opened, and an agitated and disheveled young woman—a perfect stranger—burst into the room. Ruth scanned her visitor coolly—she was far too much used to strange happenings to appear surprised.

"Pardon me, Miss Raven," the lady began, as she sank exhausted on the divan. "I am—oh, dear God!"

She immediately burst into a flood of tears, and seemed in such genuine distress that Ruth felt an overwhelming desire to help her. She crossed over and, seating herself beside her visitor, said: "I am so sorry, madam, sincerely sorry for your trouble, whatever it may be, and will do anything in my power to aid you."

The woman grasped her hand as she made spasmodic efforts to dry her tears, dabbing at each eye with a lace handkerchief which she had taken from an expensive satchel that she carried.

"Don't feel so distressed, Mrs. Delmar," ventured Ruth, patting her hand sympathetically; "perhaps things are really not so bad as they seem." She offered the small and time-worn comfort as tactfully as she could. The woman stopped, with her elaborate handkerchief suspended in the air, as she asked: "But—how did you know my name?"

"Oh, I saw it in your cardcase, which you accidently opened when you removed your handkerchief from your bag. You came to me from church, or perhaps——"

She did not finish, for the woman interrupted her with a cry of astonishment. "My dear Miss Raven! How did you——?" She stopped, looking at the girl with her mouth wide open.

Ruth smiled in spite of the grim situation. "You came then to me from church, your question assures me that I guessed aright, and you came in a great hurry."

"Why?"

"Because you have been kneeling; look at the dust on your dress, which you have been in too great a hurry to notice or remove—the first thing a woman of your evident refinement would do. You must have been kneeling in church or at home—people do not as a rule tell their beads on their knees in the street."

The woman opened her purse and looked at a costly emerald rosary, at the sight of which she again burst into tears.

"My poor father!" she wailed. "My poor father!"

"What is the trouble with your father?"

"Dead."

"Dead!"

"Murdered!" the woman uttered tragically. "Found dead in the library, at his writing-table. Oh, dear God!"

"My poor woman."

"Yes, murdered. I nearly died when I found him. I went this morning to the library to kiss him good-morning, as I've done ever since I can remember." Her grief was very pathetic to behold. "I was his only child, and when I was a tiny girl, scarcely able to walk, I used to go to him at his work in the library, to kiss him good-morning—how proud he used to be! And I have done it every morning ever since. Oh, little did I ever think I'd see—— Oh! oh!" She was almost hysterical.

"My dear, dear lady," whispered Ruth. "I am going to do all I possibly can to help you, but you must try to control yourself and tell me everything. Delay at this critical moment may be unfortunate—every moment should be made use of."

"Yes, I know I am acting like a perfect fool. You're so sweet and gentle. Thank you for your kind words. I was so distressed when I found him that I didn't know what to do. I threw on my clothes and hurried out. I stopped at the nearest church and said my rosary, and the first thing I thought was of you, so I came here. I have heard so much of your wonderful gifts. Do you think you can help me? You look so young to know much of crime."

"My dear Mrs. Delmar, I know more of crime than any one in New York, I dare say. But you have not yet told me your story. Begin at the very beginning, when you first got up this morning."

"Well, as I said before, I went down to give him my morning greeting. My bedroom is on the second floor. I went downstairs to the library, which is on the first floor. He was at his table as usual, but—oh—my God!"

She broke off, but Ruth said slowly: "Please try to control yourself, Mrs. Delmar. You see, you must help me all you can."

"Yes. Well, he was sitting, leaning forward with his head resting on the table. His arms were both thrown out straight across. At first I thought he was only sleeping, and I tiptoed over. I called him, but he did not answer, then I put my hand on his head—it was stone cold. I was too terrified even to cry out. I raised his head. His eyes were closed—he was dead."

"Poor, poor woman."

"Then I flew up to my room, threw on my things as fast as I could, half-intending to get a policeman, I guess, although I suppose I was really incapable of thinking at all. You know the rest."

"I am very sorry. But, tell me, is his body likely to be disturbed before I can see it?"

"No. I did have sense enough to tell the servants to leave everything alone till I returned. I knew they always did that in detective stories I have read."

"That is very good." Ruth arose and, crossing the room to a small table, tapped twice on the bell, which stood in its center. Almost immediately a colored girl entered the room with a small hat, motor coat and veil on her arm.

"Thank you, Rosie," said Ruth, at which the girl smiled in evident pleasure. "I am going out now, and probably will not be home for lunch, so you may take the opportunity to do any little errands you happen to have."

"Yes, Miss Ruth," the girl answered, as she withdrew.

"That's Rosie Wood, my one servant," she explained as she donned her wraps, trying to distract her visitor's attention from her painful thoughts. "We have a little system of calls, you know. I tap once for tea, twice if I am going motoring and want my wraps, three times for lights, etc. You see, I have little time to waste, as a rule, and it is surprising how much time this saves. It once meant the capture of a notorious burglar, just as he was leaving the country, when a moment's delay would have meant absolute failure."

"I see."

"I am now going with you—before the police arrive—so I can see how things are. The police are very much against me for some reason; they will certainly prevent my seeing the corpse, if possible."

"Then come at once," Mrs. Delmar said, springing up. "My limousine is outside. We can get there immediately."

CHAPTER TWO

"ON THE TRAIL"

As the limousine flew along the streets Ruth settled back silently and viewed her new acquaintance from between half-closed lids.

She was about twenty-three years of age, a tall, blonde woman, and—when clothed and in her right mind (Ruth's thought, not mine)—would probably be considered quite pretty. She was unquestionably a lady, and had undoubtedly been greatly attached to her father.

Ruth suddenly broke the silence as she said: "You say you found your father dead. What makes you think he had been murdered?"

"Why, I don't know exactly," the woman replied, "except that he said, quite playfully, the other night that a fortune-teller had predicted he would die a violent death, and when I found him dead, somehow I felt that it wasn't natural; I had a positive feeling that he had been murdered. I am extremely superstitious."

"So I knew when I saw the rabbit's foot you dropped on my carpet, which Rosie has probably thrown out by now. She's a negress and prone to such beliefs herself, but I've cured her of most of them. You should not place any confidence in such persons as fortune-tellers."

The woman blushed under the mild reproof. "I know I am silly. Do you know, when father told me that, I actually wanted him to wear an amulet to prevent it. Oh, dear, maybe if he had, he wouldn't be dead now."

Ruth looked at the woman in grim humor. "Truly, it takes a wealthy woman to make a fool of herself," thought she. "If she had been a poor working girl she'd have had something else to think of besides rabbits' feet and amulets."

"What is your father's name?" she asked aloud.

"Charles Chalmers."

"Charles Chalmers, the philanthropist and reformer? I see. Was it not he who waged such a war on factories employing child labor?"

"Yes, and he did a vast amount of good. Poor, dear father! His latest hobby was white-slavery. He and my husband were always quarreling over it."

"Over what?"

"White-slavery." Mrs. Delmar stopped suddenly and gazed at Ruth solemnly, seeming to be debating a question in her mind. Finally, she continued: "Miss Raven, I would like to tell you something. My husband has made me very unhappy at times."

"I am sorry."

"Yes, he has. He seemed to take father as a joke, and when father became interested in the white slave question he became quite indignant against him."

"No doubt he is like a great many other men and does not believe much in the real virtue of women."

"That's just it. You seem to have wonderful intuition. He always said that if a girl were really good, no power on earth could make her a white slave. He said she'd kill herself first."

"Quite so—in extreme cases an Irish girl would, in all probability. But many girls, particularly girls not strong either in character or intelligence (quite the kind usually sought for such purposes) would give in. Excuse me—this is a sordid subject, and has no bearing on the question in hand. I do not like to talk of it, accustomed even as I am to crime."

"Yes. But what I meant to say was that George—my husband—well, he——" She hesitated, looking somewhat sheepishly at a miniature she wore on her waist.

"Has given you much trouble by his habit of trying to flirt with every pretty girl he meets, isn't that it?"

"Yes," looking relieved. "But what made you think so?"

"From what you told me of his character. He does not believe much in the virtue of women, which means that he has had sufficient dealings with them to cause this lack of faith. This he must have sought himself—consequently he is flirtatious, for he is not good-looking enough to warrant women running after him."

"But—do you know him?"

"No."

"Then how in the name of heaven can you describe him so perfectly, even to his looks—for I never thought him handsome, even when I married him and was most in love with him."

Ruth smiled. "You love him very much yet. If you didn't, a woman of your obvious breeding and refinement wouldn't indulge in the bourgeois custom of wearing his miniature in public. The original of that picture was not your father, for I have seen his pictures in the papers many times."

"You are the most wonderful woman I have ever met!" exclaimed Mrs. Delmar in admiration. "What wonderful gifts you possess."

"By no means—a good memory and an ability to put two and two together are quite common, I am sure. That is all I have."

The car turned into a side street and slowed down, coming to a full stop before a pretentious mansion. It was such a remarkably beautiful dwelling, with its profusion of many hued flowers and green vines creeping everywhere, that Ruth could not suppress an exclamation of pleasure.

"What a beautiful place," she cried, "what a perfectly beautiful place!"

Mrs. Delmar gathered up her skirts and prepared to leave the car. "I am glad you like it, Miss Raven; it's my home."

"Indeed. Then let us make haste."

They were met at the door by an obsequious male in gorgeous apparel, who bowed low as they passed.

Ruth, whose all-seeing eyes saw everything at a glance, mentally noted the extreme richness and costliness of the furniture.

"Swells," thought she. (Like most matter-of-fact people she made use of considerable slang, finding that it saved time in a great many cases—minutes being important factors in her excessively busy life.) "Swells, real swells. Genuine Persian rugs—no imitations there. And real marble sculpture," as she noted an extremely shapely—and nude—young woman, who reposed on a pedestal, pointing an arrow at the chandelier and around whose waist some one of delicate mind and pure intention had obligingly tied a purple scarf—which did little service, however, as an immodest breeze insisted on blowing the marble lady's impromptu skirt disgracefully high.

Ruth, however, was not shocked at the disclosure, not belonging to that class of near-saints who consider a shape that scorns the need of corsets a disgrace. Instead, she trod along after Mrs. Delmar, and in her wake entered the oak-framed door which led to the library.

CHAPTER THREE

"CLUES"

As they passed through the door, the first object that met her gaze was the figure of Mr. Chalmers, over which had been thrown a covering.

"I thought best to cover him over till you came, ma'am," explained a young Irish servant girl, who was standing near. "I didn't think it would do any harm, and it seemed sort of disrespectful to leave him like that."

Ruth smiled at the girl as she replied: "You did quite right, and you are a brave girl to stay here by yourself with him."

With the girl's help she carefully removed the covering, and Mrs. Delmar immediately burst into tears. Ruth motioned the girl to take her to the couch, as she set about examining the body.

She raised his head and looked at his face. He was apparently a man of about fifty, and—when alive—had no doubt been very distinguished-looking. He had been dead some time. Ruth was very well versed in medical matters, having made it a private study to aid her in her criminal investigations.

Mrs. Delmar had subsided, and was watching her from the couch, awaiting her verdict. It was not long in coming. "He has been murdered," Ruth said slowly, without looking up, as she continued her examination. "Poisoned."

"Poisoned, and by whom?"

"That's what I am going to find out."

"What kind of poison?" Mrs. Delmar asked again.

"By a very rare poison—so rare as to be almost un-

known by medical experts. I myself have never come across its being used before, although I know its effects, and have some of it in my own laboratory at home. It is called 'Kapestri,' deriving its name from the East Indian insect which supplies it. The kapestri is a small spider—not larger than a common fly."

"Is it's bite then so poisonous?"

"Not at all. It is perfectly harmless, and never bites or stings. The poison is produced from a secretion which these insects form at certain periods of the year, and even then it is not fatal till it has been removed from the insect and allowed to reach a certain stage of putrefaction. After that one drop of it would kill a regiment of the strongest soldiers."

"How terrible!"

"Terrible indeed," replied Ruth, as she remained intently looking at the dead man's face. "And there is no known antidote or cure. Once a person has been given the poison there is no possible hope for him. However, it kills instantly, acting directly upon the heart, and so the victim suffers no pain."

"Thank God, then, my poor father did not suffer."

"No. See how peaceful he looks. Your father had a splendid character, if I know anything of faces. He was thoroughly upright. Still, I am afraid he was rather impetuous, is not that true?"

"He was, yes. And very impulsive, too."

"Too straightforward and outspoken to carry on an intrigue, or keep a disgraceful secret successfully? Am I right?"

"You are—however you find out such things."

"If I told people all my secrets they would soon learn to do without me," Ruth answered with a slight smile.

"But, tell me, how do you know he was murdered—poisoned?"

"From what I learn, there was no motive for his suicide, and if there was, he is the last type of man to resort to that means out of a difficulty. A man with a chin like the rock of Gibraltar could never be a coward. Look here."

Mrs. Delmar arose and went to her side. "Do you see those dark, red circles under his eyes, and the purple tinge to his lips?" said Ruth. "He never had such circles under his eyes alive, did he?"

"No," the woman answered, staring at the marks in awe. "And his lips were always pale."

"So I thought. Had they been normally red, they would now be black instead of purple. Poisons frequently affect the lips fist. However, this is the only one I know of which leaves that peculiar mark under the eyes. There is one hard thing to face in this matter; it is impossible to tell how the poison was administered—whether injected, taken into the stomach with food, or by any other means. It leaves absolutely no trace, save in the two instances I have mentioned. If injected, the wound of the needle-point would be too small to locate, and, anyway, the murderer would probably have made the puncture where it would be impossible to see it—where the hair is thickest, for instance. What was he doing here, as a rule, this time of day?"

"Laying out his day's work, I believe. He was very industrious for a wealthy man. He scarcely took any recreation."

"I see. Why, what in the world is this?" Ruth cried, as she stooped and picked up a large red rose from the floor where it lay almost concealed by the table. "A rose. Where did it come from?"

"I do not know." Mrs. Delmar looked at her in amazement, wondering what there was in a rose to excite her that way.

"Do you know?" she asked the maid.

"No. I never saw it before. I was here dusting the books when Mr. Chalmers came into the library this morning, and I know he did not carry it in his hand, because he had a large law book in one hand and a notebook in the other. And it wasn't in the room when he came in either, for I had just dusted the furniture."

"How long were you in the room with him?"

"About ten minutes. Then I went to the door to answer the postman's ring."

"Were there any letters for Mr. Chalmers this morning?"

"I do not know. I never sort out the mail. I did not even look to see if there was anything for myself this morning, I was in such a frightful hurry to get through my morning's work, as I was to have the afternoon off. I laid the mail on the stand in the hall and went upstairs to dust."

"Is this your usual method when the postman comes?"

"Yes. I always leave it for Jasper, Mr. Chalmer's secretary, to attend to. This was Mr. Chalmer's special instructions. There was an important letter lost not long ago, and since that Mr. Chalmers forbade any one to touch it, beyond taking it from the postman. But I usually glance through it to see if there is anything for me. I am sorry I didn't look this morning, if it would have helped you, ma'am, as sure's my name is Kate Donovan."

"I should like to know if Mr. Chalmers received any letters this morning?" asked Ruth. "Where's the waste-basket?"

"It wouldn't help you any, Miss Raven," Mrs. Delmar answered. "Father always kept the envelopes his letters came in. If he received any mail, his secretary will know, however."

"Where is he?"

"He left early. He was only here about five minutes this morning."

"Will he be back to-day?" Ruth looked at her searchingly. "Believe me, my questions may sound foolish to you, but there is a reason for them."

"Of course," the servant answered. "But I don't think Mr. Jasper will be back, as he was going over to Newark on some business for Mr. Chalmers, and I heard Mr. Chalmers tell him not to return to-day, as he intended to go to the matinée this afternoon."

"I see. What was Mr. Chalmers doing the last you saw of him, Kate?" Ruth asked the girl.

"Sitting at that table, almost in the same position as he is in now."

"What was he doing?"

"Nothing. I remember plainly, because he spoke to me as I was leaving. He was sitting there with his hand under his chin, and asked me, as I was leaving, what time the performance at the Gayety Theater started. I thought it funny for him to ask that, as he never went much to the theaters, especially burlesque theaters like the Gayety."

"I thank you, Kate. Hello, what's this?" Ruth stooped, and held up to view a lace handkerchief.

"Who in this house has the initial 'Z'?" she asked, looking up with bright eyes.

"Z?" replied Mrs. Delmar, looking puzzled. "Z? Why, nobody, is there, Kate?"

"No, ma'am, nobody."

"This handkerchief," observed Ruth, examining it minutely, "belonged to an untidy lady, whose name began with Z, and who indulged rather freely in cosmetics and cheap perfumes. It reeks of 'Dolly Dimples' (the latest smelling horror, I believe), is frayed at the edges, and has generous traces of Rouge No. 18 on it. Belonged to an actress, perhaps, though not a successful one." Suddenly she turned toward Mrs. Delmar. "Pardon me, was Mr. Chalmers—ah—what could be called a ladies' man?"

"Goodness, no!" exclaimed the lady in horror. "And he certainly did not have anything to do with cheap actresses, either," this last somewhat heatedly.

Ruth, in the meantime, had pulled out the drawer of the library table.

"Whose picture is this?" she asked, bringing into view a photograph of a dark-eyed lady which she had found in the drawer.

"I do not know," answered Mrs. Delmar, profoundly mystified, as she examined the picture. "I never saw it before. She is very beautiful, isn't she?"

"Very," answered Ruth, somewhat sarcastically. She had not seen anything in particular to bear out Mrs. Delmar's belief in her father's disdain for "cheap actresses." "Do you know who the original of this picture is, Kate?"

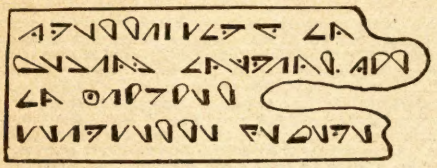
Kate looked at it some time before replying. "No, I don't, and yet I seem to know that face, too," she answered, knitting her brows.

"Exactly what I thought, too. Where have I seen that face before?" She racked her memory, but without effect. Delving into the drawer again, she presently held out something else. "More mystery," she exclaimed, holding up a scrap of paper, which was covered with strange signs and markings. "What in the world is this?"

"I am utterly at a loss to account for it," said Mrs. Delmar resignedly. Her rather slow mind could not keep up with this sudden unearthing of mysteries in her quiet household. "What kind of writing is it, anyway?"

"A cipher, I should say," replied Ruth.

It was written on a small scrap of paper, which had evidently been torn in two, as one side was ragged and uneven. The following is an exact reproduction:



"Humph! I am mighty glad I found these before the police come. Will you let me keep these articles, Mrs. Delmar? The rose, handkerchief, picture and cipher, I mean. They may develop into important clues."

"By all means, Miss Raven. I put the entire matter in your hands. You shall be liberally rewarded if you bring to justice the fiend who so foully murdered my father."

"Then I shall be going now. I will take these articles with me. No doubt I shall have something definite to tell you before long." She paused as she reached the door. "I have a request to make of you both. In no case let the police know I have been here, or that I have these articles in my possession. The police are very hostile to me—I have uncovered too much political graft to be popular in those quarters. Besides, they would probably create much scandal out of these things I have, particularly the photograph—you see? It is quite obvious. Good-by."

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE WOMAN OF THE PHOTOGRAPH"

PEOPLE who are too deliberate in their methods never amount to much. Those who make up their minds in a hurry are usually the successful ones. Ruth belonged to the latter class.

Seated in Mrs. Delmar's costly limousine, she drew down the shades and, settling back, closed her eyes in deep thought.

"I wonder who is the original of that photograph?" she reflected. Then she opened her satchel and, drawing out the picture, examined it minutely.

"A remarkably beautiful woman. Let me see if I can read that face. Extremely arched eyebrows—romantic temperament; full lips, well curved—generous, but ill-tempered at times—look at that down-curving corner. Heavy jaws, for a woman—sensuous. A foreigner, beyond question. No self-respecting American would wear such earrings—not even the society imbeciles." (Ruth had small respect for the intelligence of society folk.) "Quite the type of woman who would set herself out to catch Mr. Chalmers. "Say," smiling to herself, "that gentleman was some chaser, I'll bet, in spite of his daughter's opinion. Well, here I am at home," as the car drew up in front of her apartment.

She entered hastily. Rosie met her in the hall and, taking her wraps, withdrew. Presently the girl re-entered with a tray, on which were a small teapot and some sandwiches.

"I thought you'd be hungry, miss, so I jes' got dese heah san'wiches ready foh you."

"Thank you, Rosie. I am very hungry," and she gave ample proof a moment later.

"Say, Miss Ruth, I jes' been readin' about dat gal in de mohnin' papah."

"What girl?"

"Do you know, dere's somethin' mighty onusual about dat case."

"What on earth do you mean, Rosie? What case?"

"Oh, I forgot. You done went out before the extry came out to-day—about de fire. Dere was a small piece in it about Georgette Valeer."

"You mean Georgette LeVere, the missing chorus girl?"

"Yes, dat's de one. They done foun' a clue."

"Yes—where?"

"In a roomin' house on Fourteenth street. She came and hired a room dere fer a week. She done surprise everybody by disappearin' again in de night. I tell you, Miss Ruth, dere's somethin' mighty quah about dat. Folks don' appeah and disappeah like dat, without no reason. 'Tain't natural."

"Perhaps she killed herself. Was there any evidence of suicide?"

"No, ma'am, none. No evidence o' nothin'. She jes' done turn up missin' again. An' the woman who run de house says she seemed onusual happy—smilin' at everybody and singin' to herself all de time de evenin' befo'. Dere was somethin' else funny about it, too. I done forgot to tell you befo'." Rosie hesitated, rolling her large black eyes.

"Yes. And what?"

"A great big red rose, which dey foun' layin' on her pillow."

"What!" Ruth jumped from her seat in astonishment. "Show me that paper, Rosie."

"Heah it is, on the table, Miss Ruth. I done put it heah foh you, knowin' you'd want to read it."

Ruth hurriedly scanned the paper, but it was only a small paragraph, and gave no more information than Rosie had given, except to say that the police were putting forth every effort to locate the missing girl—which caused Ruth to smile slightly.

"Well, something told me Georgette's disappearance was in some way connected with Chalmers' death," observed Ruth. "And that rose again—now what is the meaning of that?"

Calling to Rosie, she said: "Bring me my wraps. As you said, there's something peculiar about this girl's case. I am going to have a look at the room she occupied in Fourteenth street. It may be I will discover something which the police have overlooked—it is more than likely. Good-by."

She hailed a cab, and was soon on her way downtown. She did not care to use her motor car on such occasions—most people knew her, and she desired as little publicity as possible at this particular time.

The cab finally turned into Fourteenth street and stopped at the address given in the paper. A large gray automobile, luxuriously appointed, was standing in front of the door. Ruth was just about to alight when the door of the house opened and out came a very expensively garbed lady. She appeared greatly distressed and held her head down as she walked slowly over and seated herself in the car. Just as the chauffeur started the machine the woman happened to glance around, and her eyes met those of Ruth. She started slightly, and hastily turned away as the car whizzed on its way up the street.

"Now, what do you know about that?" exclaimed Ruth,

relapsing into her favorite slang as she sank back into the seat in utter amazement. "I've found her—the woman of the photograph! And I recognize her now. I knew I'd seen her before," she continued, as she alighted from the cab. "Wait till I return," she directed the cabman. "I want you to take me home. I'll be only a moment."

She walked up the steps and rang the bell. "What do you know about that?" she repeated to herself, as she waited for some one to respond. "So Mr. Chalmers was friendly enough with Faydette Faure, the star of the Gayety Theater, to warrant her giving him her photograph—in spite of his dislike for women. The old sport! And that was Faydette Faure. I saw her at Chandley's Cabaret one night. And I must say, you've got to hand it to her; for a burlesque actress she can act like a lady—even though she did put away *some* champagne."

At this stage of her meditations the door opened and a disheveled female appeared. She surveyed Ruth in evident perplexity for a moment or so, then asked her what she wanted.

"I came to inquire about the young lady who had a room here—Miss LeVere."

At the mention of the name the woman trembled violently, and looked very much frightened as she replied: "Oh, are you another one of those police folks? I thought I was through with them. I tell you I couldn't help what happened; I ain't to blame if she took a notion to disappear during the night."

"Yes, yes, I understand that. I am not blaming you; neither am I connected with the police. I simply came to look at the room, if possible."

"Oh," much relieved, "that's different. Step inside. I can't see how there should be any objection to that, seeing that you are not connected with the police—as you say. There were twenty-five dollars in her pocketbook which she left, and no one has come to claim it. I think I should have it, don't you—with all this notoriety, too. I don't know what will become of me, with a husband and six children to support, and him wanting four eggs for breakfast every morning, not to mention——"

Luckily she had to pause for breath, and Ruth grasped the opportunity to express some wholly insincere sympathy, stating that she was in a hurry and would like to view the room at once, mentally wondering if the puzzle could not be solved by the theory that poor Georgette had been talked to death.

CHAPTER FIVE

MRS. WILLIAMS

THE woman escorted her into the bedroom which the girl had occupied. She hastily examined every nook and corner, but there seemed to be absolutely no trace of any clue to help her. The room had evidently been freshly swept and cleaned, in the hope of securing a new roomer, no doubt.

"Did you know the young lady, miss?" asked the woman, watching her rather curiously.

"No," said Ruth, divining her thoughts and answering them. "I am quite sure you will be left in full possession of the money you mentioned. According to the papers a thorough search was made for the girl's relatives, which was of no avail. She seemed to have been in New York all alone. However, say nothing to the police, or they will relieve you of it beyond question. Can you tell me something of how she came here, Mrs. ——"

"Williams is my name—Anna Williams—after St. Anne, the grandmother of Christ, you know, which don't fit me very well, being as I was married young and had more than one child, being most of them boys, too, which is a great deal worse than girls, for they're such a trial to raise, always breaking windows or something. I declare, those boys next door——"

"Yes, yes, go on," murmured Ruth, tragically.

"You wanted to know about the young lady," stated Mrs. Williams. "Oh, yes, I forgot. It was the night before last, as you probably remember, and the rain was coming down in torrents. I was just saying to Survivor—my husband (named Survivor on account of being one of twins—the other one died when two days old—they say the doctor dropped him, but I never believed it)—I was just saying to Survivor what a night it was for folks without a home, and he said for me to stop worrying about the weather and go to bed, and try to get some sleep so as to be able to do my ironing the next day. I wash and iron for all of my roomers, and had an extra hard day, my boiler having broken that morning, which——"

"Very considerate of Survivor—I mean Mr. Williams—I am sure," gushed Ruth politely, mentally wondering where such a flat-chested person as Mrs. Williams could store so much oxygen.

"Wasn't it, though? And he is always just that way—always afraid I'll overdo. I remember one day last summer, I was heating some water to wash, and he made me sit down while he fanned me for almost ten minutes, so's I wouldn't give out before I got through—he's such a dear, kind soul!"

"You don't mean it! Isn't he, though?" gravely replied Ruth, suppressing a wild and not unnatural desire to shriek. "What a terrible thing for Survivor if you should give out," she added with a fine sarcasm which went right over the lady's head, for she answered: "Oh, it would be terrible! And him so used to having everything ready for him. Do you know, his socks——"

Ruth found it impossible to continue her forced politeness. "Would you make a superhuman effort and try to drop Survivor from the conversation for just about three minutes," she said icily. "You say this young lady came here the other night, at what time?"

"About eleven o'clock. Surv——"

"Was she alone?"

"Yes, all alone. She seemed very happy, and said she was to be married soon to a fine young man. Then the next morning she was found missing—her bed had not been disturbed."

"What became of the rose that was on her pillow?" asked Ruth.

"I threw it out. Why?" the woman asked anxiously.

"Oh—nothing. They have found no trace of her since."

"None."

"Who first discovered her absence, Mrs. Williams?"

"One of my roomers—a young woman who occupied the room next to hers. She thought it funny that the girl did not show up for breakfast (these boarders never miss those things, especially actresses—though God knows they're slow enough on pay-days). She thought nothing much of the matter, however, till almost noon, when she knocked at the door and met with no answer. Then she pried it open with a poker, and you know the rest."

"Are you sure you do not know where the rose is that was on the bed?"

"No. I told you before that I had thrown it out. I don't know where it is now, of course. Why do you ask?"

"I am rather curious about this whole matter, that is all," Ruth answered quickly.

"And who might you be?"

Ruth was prepared. "My name is Marguerite Clayton Carson. I should have introduced myself before."

"Why are you so much interested in this case?"

"I am a novelist. I write books. I read of this case in the papers and thought I might get an idea for a story, so I came."

"How grand! And so you're a story-writer, like Charlotte M. Braeme and Laura Jean Libbey! What's the name of one of your books, please? I'd like to read one of them."

"Oh, you flatter me," simpered Ruth, preparing to go. "Well, my latest book out is called 'The Hand Without a Wedding-Ring; or, Foolish Flossie's Frivolous Flirtations.' You can buy it at any bookstore for ten cents."

"Really? What a nice title—sounds like Gwendolyn

Jones Johnson's book—'No Clothes to Her Back; or, Why She Was Hidden Away.' I adore high-class literature, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed. I can see you have a very—ah—unusual mind," replied Ruth, as she prepared to go. "Good-by."

Ruth had a very quick-acting brain; moreover, there were few types of human nature which she had failed to meet. Somehow, the woman's general manner gave out a vague but unmistakable atmosphere of uneasiness which was not exactly in keeping with her easy-going and decidedly foolish talk. Ruth turned in the doorway and, managing so that the light shone full upon the woman's face, determined to take her off her guard.

"Why do you wear a wig?" she asked impudently and abruptly.

"Why—what——" exclaimed the woman, putting her hand up to her head in an alarmed manner.

"Why do you wear a wig?" she repeated.

"Who said I did?" began Mrs. Williams, a trifle defiantly.

"No one, but I see you do. I was a hair-dresser once, and know a wig when I see one. And yours is rather a costly one, too, for a woman in your walk of life to be able to afford."

The woman paused for a moment in thought, then she replied: "Yes, I do wear a wig. I am ten years older than Survivor, and my hair is turning gray; and you know how men——" She paused with an expressive gesture, evidently at a loss for words.

"I see," replied Ruth, as she opened the door, mentally adding, when she found herself outside: "You're clever, but rather a poor liar, Mrs. Williams, or whatever your real name is. Your comeback on the title of my book was not original—I've heard it in vaudeville before. You were married young—you are ten years older than Survivor. I wonder how old he is now? Being married young could not mean more than married at twenty—humph! Surviver was a bridegroom at ten—truly, he was a remarkable boy! My dear, you'll hear from Marguerite Clayton Carson."

CHAPTER SIX

MRS. DELMAR'S RETURN.

RUTH was just finishing her supper that evening when the doorbell rang. As Rosie was taking the evening off, she answered it herself.

"Mrs. Delmar!" she exclaimed. "Come in."

"Yes, Miss Raven," her visitor answered, as she entered the parlor and seated herself—knocking over a footstool as she did so. "Oh, you must excuse me. I'm so excited and upset over this whole affair that I'm really not responsible for what I do half the time," she apologized as she adjusted the overturned ottoman.

"That is all right; I understand perfectly," said Ruth, smiling pleasantly. She was really rather fond of Mrs. Delmar, who seemed to have had more than ordinary affection for her father. She remained silently watching her visitor for a few moments in order to give her time to regain her self-control. "She is a woman of an unusually affectionate and high-strung temperament," thought Ruth, studying her. "Terribly sensitive and I'm afraid a trifle jealous—as sensitive, imaginative people always are in regard to those they care for. She is imaginative, all right, which undoubtedly accounts for her putting so much faith in those silly superstitions. I am afraid she has suffered a great deal through that husband of hers, for I'm sure he is a chaser—gathering from my own observations and what she has herself told me."

"Have you found out anything yet, Miss Raven?" asked Mrs. Delmar presently.

"Only one thing of any importance," answered Ruth slowly. "I have several theories, all somewhat vague as yet."

Suddenly she leaned forward and looked Mrs. Delmar directly in the eyes. "Mrs. Delmar, you of course must understand that complete frankness in a matter of this kind is absolutely necessary. That fact is obvious."

"Certainly," the other woman replied, raising her brows in surprise at Ruth's statement.

"I do not mean that you have not been frank with me so far, Mrs. Delmar, for I know you have been. What I just said now was by way of apology in advance of some rather personal and I fear rather uncomplimentary questions in regard to your father's private life and character."

"Very well, Miss Raven. Ask anything you like, and I will answer to the best of my ability. I have placed the entire matter in your hands, and am only too glad to help you in any way I can."

"Thank you. Now, in the first place, did you ever know your father to have any relations with women—particularly women, say, not *too* particular?"

"Positively never, Miss Raven. His time was too much taken up with his philanthropic work to think of such things."

"How long has your mother been dead?"

"Since my birth."

"I see," said Ruth, gazing out of the window reflectively "Was Mr. Chalmers ever in love with any woman since your mother's death?"

"I could not say, but if he was he kept it to himself."

"What is your opinion?"

"Well," answered Mrs. Delmar slowly, "I do not think he was. I have often heard from other people who knew my mother how devoted father was to her always. Their marriage was an unusually happy one," she wound up, heaving a deep sigh as she no doubt thought of several stormy scenes in her own domestic life.

"Your mother's death was a great shock to him, then?"

"Oh, terrible! I do not think he ever was the same man afterward. I think it was grief that made him work so hard in order to forget. He worked furiously always, never taking a rest. But—why do you ask? Do you suspect a woman of murdering him?"

"No," Ruth answered. "I have no definite idea as yet who did it, though of course the clues seem to indicate a woman. At any rate, there must have been a woman with him not long before his death, which would account for the handkerchief which I found. But it is of that photograph I am thinking."

"Oh, yes. I had forgotten it. Have you discovered who the original of it is, Miss Raven?"

"Yes, I have, and that is what made me ask those questions in regard to your father."

"Who is she?"

Ruth waited a second, then looked at her deliberately as she replied: "Faydette Faure."

On hearing the name, Mrs. Delmar's manner changed suddenly, as she arose hastily from her seat and, crossing over, laid a trembling hand on Ruth's arm. "Faydette Faure!" she repeated. "That hussy at the Gayety. Oh, heavens!" She sank down helplessly on the divan at Ruth's side.

"Why are you so much excited over the matter, Mrs. Delmar? Surely there is nothing so terribly strange in the discovery of an actress' photograph in a man's possession. I dare say that there are thousands of men in New York who have Miss Faure's picture on their desks. All the more free advertising for her. And it should mean nothing in the hands of such a clean-living man as your father was." This last remark Ruth made with just the slightest touch of sarcasm, which Mrs. Delmar was quick to notice and resent.

"I don't care what you think!" she cried. "He *was* clean-living, and I don't care if he did have that hussy's picture. How I hate her—the cat!"

"Aha!" thought Ruth, "I see where Delmar has been at it again, no doubt. Why do you hate her, Mrs. Delmar?" she asked.

"The wretch! Why? Because she is trying to break

ap my home—she is trying to break my heart—she is trying to steal my husband! But she won't do it—she won't—she won't! I'll——"

"Calm yourself, dear. What gives you the idea that she is trying to steal your husband?"

"Because I have proof of it," Mrs. Delmar replied, opening her hand-bag. "Look at that." She handed Ruth a letter. "Read it. She even calls him 'Dear Del'!"

The letter was written in a small delicate hand, executed very neatly. It ran:

"DEAR DEL: Your note last night was rather a surprise, and I'm sure your demands are rather pressing—not to say imperative. Now, you silly man, let me tell you something. I am successful—that sounds horribly egotistical, but you must admit it is the truth. I am doing well in a profession which I love (in spite of its tawdry atmosphere). Now, why should I give up my life—for the stage life *is* my life—for a man who thinks he is in love with me, but who is really only in love with my costumes and make-up as he sees them over the footlights?

"I assure you I am quite a different sort of a person, really, from what I appear on the stage. I'm dreadfully cranky and ill-tempered at times, and awfully selfish, too. So you must realize that it is best for all concerned that I refuse your invitation—for there is no need of leading a man on only to make a fool of him in the end, and I am not cruel, whatever other faults I have.

"I have the deepest respect for a certain man, but am sure he is not suited to me—for his youth is against him, in the first place. I prefer worldly-wise men—not boys.

"FAYDETTE."

"Well," observed Ruth, after reading the letter through twice, "it really seems to me, Mrs. Delmar, that you are worrying yourself rather foolishly."

"Why? Isn't that proof that she's been carrying on with my husband? 'Dear Del'—oh—the cat!"

"No, you are wrong. However, I wish you would let me keep this letter. It gives quite a side-light on Faydette Faure's real character. She is evidently kind-hearted, for the letter is unmistakably sincere."

"Oh, so you make excuses for her, do you?" cried Mrs. Delmar, giving her a chilling glance. "Well, I don't. Those actresses are all alike; there are none of them any good."

"Have you ever met one off the stage, Mrs. Delmar?"

"No, and I want to meet none. I'm very particular about my social acquaintances."

"Well"—Ruth was amused at her tirade, but felt that she stood in need of a reproof—"you were not very particular in regard to your masculine acquaintances when you met your husband, were you? And if you have never met any actresses off the stage you are the last person on earth to be able to say anything about them. I have met many—some of my dearest friends are theatrical people. Take the much-abused chorus girl, for instance; I've known many who had far higher moral standards than your pampered society women, whose only sin is being discovered in wrong-doing."

"Pardon me, Miss Raven," said Mrs. Delmar humbly. "I know I'm acting like a cat. I know that there are thousands of virtuous women on the stage. But I'm so upset! My husband is breaking my heart—and I do love him so!"

She sank back again on the divan. Ruth tried to comfort her, as she said: "I am very sorry, Mrs. Delmar. But you really are distressing yourself needlessly in reference to Miss Faure, regardless of what your husband has done in the past."

"What makes you say that, Miss Raven?"

"I have two reasons. The first is that Miss Faure does not think favorably of your husband's offer, whatever it is. Don't you see she is trying to discourage him?"

"No, I don't see it. I think that's her way of leading him on. She just wants to make herself more valuable. If she were trying to discourage him, she'd not write at all—she'd ignore him. Look there—'I have the deepest respect for a certain man'—doesn't that give her away?"

"God help you!" thought Ruth, "where are your brains?" Aloud she said: "How old is your husband, Mrs. Delmar?"

"He's much older than I am—he's forty-two. But you ask such pointless questions sometimes. What on earth has his age to do with it?"

"Everything, in this instance. Would you call a man of forty-two a boy?"

"Miss Raven, sometimes I think you are making fun of me. Of course not! Why do you ask?"

"That is the other reason I mentioned when I said you are worrying yourself over nothing. Can't you see by this letter that your husband is not in love with Miss Faure, neither is she in love with him?"

"It may be true that she is not in love with him, after all. But he certainly is in love with her—the letter shows that."

Ruth gazed at her impatiently, feeling a sudden impulse to shake her for her stupidity. "The letter shows nothing of the kind," she finally answered. "If a man is in love with a woman himself, do you think it likely that he would be pleading another man's cause with her?"

"No."

"Well, that's what your husband has been doing with Miss Faure."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this. Look at the end of the letter. She writes: 'I have the deepest respect for a certain man, but am sure he is not suited to me, for his youth is against him, in the first place. I prefer worldly-wise men—not boys.' Your husband has a friend—a youth—who is in love with Miss Faure. This friend evidently asked your husband to intercede for him, which he did. That is the solution of the whole thing."

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Mrs. Delmar, intensely relieved. "How wonderfully you figured it out! And my poor dear husband—no wonder he acted so upset."

"Did you speak to him about this letter? You did not tell me how you discovered it."

"He dropped it on the floor last night. I asked him about it this morning. He seemed awfully upset, and said I'd have to trust him—he couldn't explain it. He wanted me to give him back the letter, but I kept it to show to you. I am so glad I did. If you wish to keep it, you may do so."

"Yes, I think it may lead to something. I would like to know who it is that your husband is trying to help. You have no idea?"

"None. I will ask him, if you like. I could do it now, as I understand how the thing stands."

"No, no! Please don't," Ruth said hastily. "You'd probably spoil things by doing so. I'll find a means of discovering who it is. Everything that has the slightest bearing on this case is worth investigating. Sometimes the remotest clues prove to be the most vital ones."

"I see. I will go now. I am so glad I called; you have lifted a tremendous weight off my mind. I am so grateful to you, Miss Raven! You are really a most remarkable person. Good-by."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"IN THE MERRY CHORUS"

"WELL, this affair seems to be getting more mysterious with every new development," Ruth ejaculated the following day, as she seated herself in her parlor to think matters over. "That Mrs. Williams, or whatever her real name is, is up to something. And I wonder what Faydette Faure wanted? Still, I suppose her presence there was only natural—considering that Georgette LeVere was in her troupe. Faydette Faure"—she knitted her well-marked eyebrows in perplexity for a moment. "Faydette Faure—let me see—what do I know about her? She is a so-called new-

comer in this country—from Paris supposedly, although it might be a safe bet that her real name is Smith or Jones. And yet she really has a foreign appearance, and she has a shape that seems all her own—if a trifle emphatic—most American women decidedly have not. And Chalmers—humph!" Ruth curled her lip in disgust. "Well, the poor man's dead, so I'll let him alone." She paused a moment in thought. "Rosie!" she called.

The colored girl responded immediately.

"Bring me my black-and-white suit. Let's see. I think that's my noisiest—and wait, baste up the hem. I may as well go the limit. While you are doing that I will see what else I have to do."

Rosie bowed in mute assent and withdrew. She was not surprised at any order her mistress gave her, knowing full well she had a good reason for everything she said or did. Consequently, she only slightly raised her eyebrows at Ruth's appearance, upon returning a short while later, with the suit on her arm.

Ruth had a blonde wig, drawn back tightly in the latest mode. Each eye was surrounded by a rim of black cosmetic, which extended out within an inch of each ear. Her nose looked as if it had been poked into a flour barrel, while her cheeks flamed with "No. 18." A large piece of black court-plaster adhered to her chin, just beneath her lips, which were reddened in the most artistic fashion into a Cupid's bow.

She silently donned the dress Rosie had brought, then walked over to the mirror to examine herself.

"Ain't you a sight, Miss Ruth!" exclaimed Rosie, as Ruth adjust a screaming hat upon the side of her head.

"Huh?" answered Ruth, stepping back to note the general effect of her get-up. "Miss Ruth, indeed! I'm Folly Fleurette, and I'm going down to the Gayety to look for a job. My Gawd!" rolling up her eyes in mock despair, "times is hard. The stage ain't no place for a decent goil no more, no matter how much talent she's got." She walked over to the door with an exaggerated wiggle that sent the already giggling Rosie into convulsions on the sofa. "Never mind, Heaven will protect the woiking goil. I'll be back later."

Needless to state, Ruth attracted considerable attention going down the street, which did not annoy her in the least. She felt perfectly safe in her disguise, and the good-looking young policeman at the corner had not the faintest idea that the lemon-tressed rainbow who gave him a broad wink and giggled hilariously thereat was Miss Raven who bowed to him like a perfect lady several times a week.

As a further test, she undulated into the nearest drug-store, asked to look at the city directory, pinched the clerk on the cheek, and finally bought a package of chewing-gum. Outside, she helped herself to a piece of the chewing-gum, put the rest in her bag to be used as passports to her future acquaintance with the chorus, and finally resumed her journey, chewing and smiling on mankind in general like a benign but flirtatious cow.

The Gayety Theater was located down in the theater district, and Ruth boarded a downtown car. She alighted at Times Square, and walked down to Thirty-Eighth street, where the Gayety was situated. It was now about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a rehearsal was in progress. Ruth bit her lips to keep from smiling, as she arrived at the stage, where a very short fat man stood in the center of a group of buxom beauties, and capered and kicked and swayed as well as any of them.

An extremely bored-looking young man sat in the orchestra bit banging a noisy piano.

"That's it!" yelled the dancing director to the perspiring terpsichore. "That's it; only kick a little higher—give 'em their money's worth. Smile more, act happy—this ain't nobody's funeral."

Finally the dance ended and the little fat director sank into a nearby chair. "That'll be all right. Clear the stage now for the next act."

"Now's my chance," thought Ruth, as she walked over to where he sat.

"How do ye do?" she addressed him, standing coyly in front of him.

"Why, hello, Cutie," he replied, grinning at her approvingly.

"I'm lookin' for a job, mister," she continued.

"So I supposed. What can you do—dance—sing?"

"Dance? Well, I should say so! And sing—say, you just ought to hear me sing 'Bring Back, Oh, Bring Back My Wooden Leg'; it'll bring down the house."

"Well, you ain't going to get no prima donna job straight off the bat. I guess we can give you a place in the merry-merry, though. Can you wear tights?"

"Oh, sure. To the pure all things is pure, and besides them is only a matter of business with me. D'you want to hear me vocalize a little?"

"Hey, Archie! Try this dame's voice—just a scale or so."

Ruth swayed down to the footlights.

"All right, kid, let 'er go," said the pianist, as he struck a note on the instrument. Ruth "let 'er go," and what it lacked in quality it made up in quantity, and she kept going higher and higher with such vim that the director clapped his hands over his ears. "Stop!" he yelled. "Well," calming down, "you'll do for the chorus—you're a pretty good-looker. But if any one ever told you that you was a Geraldine Farina you can write it on your heart that they was handin' you that which absolutely wasn't exactly the truth."

"Sir," responded Ruth haughtily. "Don't youse forget that you're talking to a lady, even if I am a poor chorus goil. And if it wasn't for the fact that me poor old mother—oh, mommer, why did you leave me alone in this crule, crule woild!" Ruth broke down, sobbing.

"There, there, little kid," said the director, patting her on the arm. "You can have the job, all right. Twenty bucks per week; just think, all your own."

"Thanks," she answered, thinking. "I knew that sob-stuff would fetch him."

"All right," he continued. "It's all settled. Twenty bucks per, not perhaps, but per week—reg'lar every Monday morning. You can sit here in the wings and watch this morning. Rehearsal to-morrow at ten."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"FOLLY'S DISCOVERIES"

RUTH'S reason for entering the chorus at the Gayety was obvious. It was quite plain that Faydette Faure had been more than a mere acquaintance of Mr. Chalmers; evidently she would bear watching.

In order to totally disarm suspicion she did not attempt any sleuthing the first two days, devoting her time to her stage work with such ardor and enthusiasm that at the second matinée she won a compliment from no less a person than Faydette herself.

The chorus girls were standing in the wings awaiting their cues when Faydette made her exit. She stood for a moment, and catching Ruth's eye, smiled as she said: "How do you do, honey?" (Back of the scenes every one is "honey" or "dearie.") "You are the new girl, aren't you? You dance beautifully, too."

"Aw—you!" gushed Ruth. "You're kiddin' me."

"No, no, indeed, you are very graceful," continued the star of the Gayety, amused at Ruth's (feigned) embarrassment.

"Thanks," acknowledged Ruth, as she flitted out on the stage with the rest of the girls.

"Gee, that was some bouquet she handed you," confided Kitty Lovelace, one of the girls, after the show was over.

"Did she really mean it?" asked Ruth modestly, as she changed her dress.

"Sure," Kitty reassured, as she patted her blonde locks into place. "Say, what do you use on yours?"

"My what?"

"Hair—to give it that color, I mean."

"Oh, a friend done mine—peroxide, I think it was. Do you like the color?"

"Yes," replied Kitty. "I got to do somethin' with mine—I can't tell no more whether I'm a blonde or brunette. It's an awful pest—bein' a blonde, I mean. I wonder if there is any natural ones, huh? Say, where are you goin' to eat?"

"I don't know."

"Why don't you come with me to the Howard Craig Home?"

"What's that?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, don't you know? Why, it's a home, founded by Howard Craig—he's a reformer, or somethin'. It's for workin' girls. You can get meals there real cheap, too. Would you like to go?"

"Yes," replied Ruth, "if you say it's cheap."

"Are you short, dearie?" asked Kitty. "I could loan you a dollar or two." She offered the money with the quick generosity which is the Thesbian's strongest characteristic, high or low.

"Oh, no, thanks," replied Ruth. "You're awful kind. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Come on."

The Howard Craig Home was not very far from the theater. Ruth was thoroughly familiar with this place, despite her seeming ignorance. She had spent a whole week there, disguised as a waitress, while working on a former case.

She was beginning to take a real liking to Kitty, and had already made up her mind to help the girl when this case was settled, as she had a beautiful voice which needed only cultivation to make it amount to something. Another thing that Ruth discovered (contrary to public opinion) was that most of the girls were decent and lived on their wages, many of them being the support of younger brothers and sisters.

The two girls seated themselves in a remote corner of the dining-room, and were soon busily engaged.

"There he is," suddenly exclaimed Kitty.

"Who?" asked Ruth.

"That's him," she continued, pointing to a tall, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, who was talking to two girls seated not far away. "That's Howard Craig. Ain't he just the handsomest brute?"

"Oh, so that's Howard Craig?" replied Ruth, as she glanced at him with keen interest. This was really the first time she had seen him, as he had been abroad when she was making her former visit.

"Yes, that's him. He sometimes goes around and talks to the girls. He's awful nice."

Howard Craig finally shook hands with the girls and moved further on down the room.

"Gee, he's comin' over here!" said Kitty, as he drew closer.

"How d'you do, Mr. Craig?" she called out.

"Oh, how do you do?" he said pleasantly, as he came over and shook hands with Kitty.

"Meet a lady friend o' mine," Kitty said, doing the honors with an exaggerated air of politeness. "Miss Folly Fleurette, of the Gayety."

"Oh, indeed," he answered, smiling, as he gave Ruth a paternal handshake. "Another star, eh?"

"Aw—you!" exclaimed Kitty, giving him a coquettish tap on the arm.

He gave Kitty rather a startled glance, as if something had just occurred to him, as he said: "Who knows? Many stars began in the chorus. I hope my words come true," he added, as he resumed his way down the room.

"Ain't he just too grand!" exclaimed Kitty, watching him with admiring eyes. "He's so friendly—a perfect gen'leman. And he knows a lady when he sees one, too, you bet. I feel as though I knowed him for years, and this is only the second time I have ever spoken to him, too."

"Indeed," replied Ruth, turning to look at him. "He is very nice-looking."

"He is a prince. Wouldn't he make a swell Romeo, kid? I'd like to be his Juliet when I look into them dreamy eyes. I don't care if I am a Montmorenci or Catapult, or both. 'What's in a name—a nose by any other name would smell as good." Kitty wound up her rhapsody, preparing to go.

During the evening performance Faydette's maid became suddenly ill and was obliged to go home. Ruth eagerly offered to take her place for the evening, for which she was profoundly thankful as the evening wore on, as it gave her an excellent opportunity to study the star's character.

Faydette Faure seemed quite refined in her manners, and had a very amiable disposition. While she was on the stage doing her part Ruth busied herself examining her dressing-room. She was just about to open one of the drawers of Fayette's dresser when the door suddenly opened and in walked the most villainous-looking old hag she had ever beheld. Ruth was not abashed, but deliberately pulled the drawer open, looked carefully in, then shut it with a disappointed "Oh," as if she could not find what she was looking for. Then catching sight of a clothes brush on the table, she exclaimed: "Here it is," and set vigorously to work brushing one of Faydette's costumes.

The old woman watched her for some time in silence, then asked: "Where's Mary?"

"Who's Mary?"

"Miss Faure's maid."

"Oh, she's sick, and had to go home. I am helping Miss Faure this evening."

"Oh, I see. Well, I have a message for her, and I can't wait till she's through."

"All right, I'll give it to her, if you want me to."

"Here it is," said the old woman, as she walked over closer, handing her a sealed envelope. She was standing directly under the light, and Ruth carefully scrutinized her face. She was a woman of about seventy with small, squinting blue eyes and gray hair.

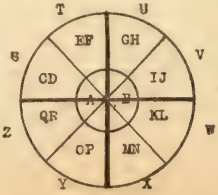
Ruth stared at her for a moment, scarcely able to believe her eyes, as she thought: "As I live, my friend from the rooming-house, Mrs. Williams, without her disguise and without her wig. I knew that voice sounded familiar."

If Mrs. Williams had any rememberace of her, she kept it well hidden, for she gave Ruth only a slight and impersonal look as she said: "See that she gets this—it's very important," and without another word withdrew.

Ruth turned the envelope over carefully. It was a plain, white envelope of a very cheap variety. There was no writing whatever on it. Just then she heard some one coming, and had just time to slip it into her bosom, when the door opened and in walked Faydette.

"Hurry, dearie," she cried to Ruth. "I must change quickly. I have only a few moments."

She only stayed long enough to make the change of costume, and Ruth was soon alone once more. She was hanging up the costume Faydette had just removed when something fluttered down to the floor. It was a folded piece of paper which must have fallen from one of the numerous garments. She hastily picked it up and unfolded it. It was a small sheet on which was the following diagram:



She stared at it in perplexity for a moment, then something seemed to strike her as funny, for she sank to the floor convulsed with silent laugher.

"Well, well, you poor bonehead!" she told herself. "Here it is, the cipher key, put right into your hands by supernatural aid, almost, and you don't know what it is."

Suddenly she became serious and, going over to the dresser, drew out the envelope the old woman had just given her. With the aid of a hair-pin she carefully raised the flap and spread out the contents on the dresser.

"More luck," she joyfully exclaimed, staring at the message, which was written in cipher. Then she put down beside this the scrap of paper she had just found on the floor, and spelled out the following line:

"BEWARE OF SPIES."

"Well, I am not much wiser than before," she remarked, as she put the paper back in the envelope, sealing it up with spirit-gum. "I wonder if that refers to me—by any chance? She was not enlightened any by watching Faydette's face as she read it half an hour later.

"She is well used to getting messages in that cipher," observed Ruth. "She reads it without the slightest difficulty. Yet she doesn't seem to understand it exactly, either," as she noted the puzzled expression on the actress' face. Faydette bade her good-night a few moments later, and she left. Just as she stepped outside the stage door a man alighted from a taxi standing near. He glanced furtively at her for an instant, then hastily entered the theater. Ruth stared after him in surprise, as she gasped: "For heaven's sake! And so you're another one, eh, Mr. Delmar? And with a good-looking wife, too. Oh, Lord, spare me from ever owning a husband! And Faydette is some vampire, surely!"

CHAPTER NINE

MR. DELMAR

SINCE her engagement in the chorus Ruth had taken up her abode with Kitty so as to avoid possible suspicion. The two had a room in Twenty-eighth street, not so very far from the theater, but on this particular night Kitty had an engagement with a "John," so Ruth went home alone. As she walked along she mused: "Now, I wonder what Mr. Delmar was doing at the stage door to-night? I am positive it must have been to see Faydette. She is usually the last one out, and I think all the other girls had left the theater by that time."

Upon reaching home she did not retire immediately, but sat down to think matters over. "Let me see that letter again," she said to herself, removing from her bosom the letter Mrs. Delmar had given her from Faydette to her husband. "I wonder if I have made a mistake in my first deduction that this letter refers to some other man and not Mr. Delmar?" She knitted her brows in deep thought for a moment or two as she read the letter through again. "Well," she reflected, "if it weren't for those last few lines I would think Delmar himself was the one, but that ending would not fit his case at all—unless perhaps she *is* trying to lead him on in a sort of negative fashion. Of course, in that case, she might try to flatter him by calling him youthful. I wonder if that could be it? There is no fool like an old fool, as some one has said before, and it is quite true that a man will believe anything a woman tells him—particularly if he is in love with her—even to thinking himself a boy. I really can't figure this out. If he *is* helping some other man, his friend must be extremely bashful and also must be a man of whom he is very fond. It is not often one man will undertake another man's courtship, for one thing, and it is not often a man will trust another man enough to allow him to have a hand in such a delicate thing as being spokesman in his love affairs. The two must be deeply attached to each other."

She again looked at the letter, and read it through once again. "Let me see. I do not know much of Mr. Delmar's private life, or his private character either, excepting what his wife has told me and what I've gathered from her. He is evidently fond of the ladies. It is only eleven o'clock now; I think I will call up Mrs. Delmar and see if she is alone. If she is, I will know he is still with Faydette, and I will have a chance to ask her a few questions about him."

There was a telephone in the hall just outside her door, and she had Mrs. Delmar on the wire in a few moments. "No, Mr. Delmar has not returned from the office. He phoned just before supper and said he had some important work which would keep him there till nearly midnight. I do not know what time he will be home as soon as he is finished. What's that? Oh, his business. Why, yes, he's a lawyer; he has an office in the Klondike Building. The firm is Lane & Delmar. He has a great many friends; I do not know which he thinks the most of. I do not know of any one he likes well enough to undertake their love-making for them. Mr. Lane? Oh, goodness no! The man's nearly seventy and a regular woman-hater. It couldn't be he. Good-by."

"So," reflected Ruth, as she hung up the receiver and returned to her room, "Mr. Delmar had an appointment with Faydette to-night; at any rate, he expected to see her. The fox—he is up to something! Well, Miss Folly Fleurette," glancing at her reflection in the mirror, "you'd better go to bed now and get your beauty sleep; you have a hard day's vamping ahead of you to-morrow."

The next morning she arose early—that is, about nine o'clock, which is early for an actress. "My Gawd!" mumbled Kitty, half-awake, "any one would think you was after doin' a one-nighter and was afraid of missin' your train. What's the matter, can't you sleep?"

"I am going for a walk," answered Ruth, beginning to dress.

"A what!" cried Kitty, sitting up in bed.

"I said I'm going for a walk," she answered, looking for her hat. "Elinor Lent Fords, the beauty specialist of the *Bugle Magazine*, says a mornin' walk is swell for the complexion. So I am going to try it."

"Oh, I see," said Kitty, as she settled herself back in bed with a grunt. "Well, no mornin' walks for me—I can get a swell complexion by walkin' to the nearest drug-store. So can any chorus goil. And foithermore, Elinor Lent Fords is a man and don't know what he says half the time. He had a crush on Dixie Miller once, and she said he was the tightest John she ever had. Never even took her to see an eclipse of the moon—though I believe he did take her once to see the tide come in."

"I believe you are talkin' in your sleep, Kitty," said Ruth, laughing. "Anyway, I am going for my walk, so good-by."

Kitty's only answer was a long-drawn snore, so she carefully opened the door and left the room noiselessly, half-smiling to herself at her friend's remarks about her beauty-walk. Kitty would have been somewhat amazed could she have followed her, for her walk only took her to the corner, where she boarded an uptown car. She alighted again at Forty-fifth street, and walked along in the direction of Sixth avenue, where the Klondike Building was situated.

Arriving there, she found the offices of Lane & Delmar to be on the third floor in the front of the building, and she entered the elevator. She glanced in the glass to see that her make-up was all right, as her appearance at this particular time was a matter of great importance.

Mr. Dalmar was in and, fortunately, was not very busy at the time, so she soon found herself being ushered into his private office. As she seated herself in a spacious arm-chair her quick glance took in everything in the room in an instant, but her gaze rested longest on his face. He was rather small in stature, and quite stout in build. His clothes showed him to be a man of very neat habits, but with an exaggeration of detail in the matter of cuffs, jewelry, etc., which carried him well past the state of being a well-dressed man into the realm of foppery.

That he was a man highly appreciative of feminine charms was very evident, for the office was literally strewn with pictures of girls. Girls on his desk, girls on the

wall, girls everywhere in fact—and none of them dressed for cold weather. One picture in particular, hanging directly over his desk, caught Ruth's eye, being a large photograph of Annette Kellerman, as she appeared in "A Daughter of the Gods"—*sans* everything in the way of clothes.

He noticed her glancing at it and, as she brought her gaze back to his face, she encountered him looking at her in high amusement.

"Don't say you're shocked, now, please!" he said, smiling. "I believe in Art for Art's sake, you know. To the pure-minded there is nothing in that picture but beauty."

"Oh, sure!" responded Ruth, with a giggle to convey the meaning that she was fully aware of the fact that he was far from the pure-minded class, which he understood and showed no sign of blushing thereat.

"May I ask why you called on me?" he asked finally, giving her an appraising glance. "A divorce or a breach of promise suit—which is it, now?"

"Say, now!" replied Ruth, with another giggle, shaking a finger at him, "who do youse think I am, huh? I am only a young voituous goil, even if I do oin my livin' on the stage. I came to see you as a friend."

"Oh, that's different. Well, there's nothing I like better than a nice girl friend. What can I do for you, my dear?" he said, with a smirk.

"Nix on the mush, Mr. Delmar. I ain't your dear, or no other man's dear, either. I came to warn you, that's what I done."

He looked at her in surprise. "To warn me! Of what? Is the hidden hand about to strike, or the clutching hand about to clutch? Oh, I see," laughing good-naturedly. "You are Miss Mystery, the female detective, and have come to tell me that the hooded terror is on my trail. Curses!"

"You can kid all you like," she said, with a quaver in her voice, "but I came to warn you as a friend. Of course, if you don't want to listen, you can go ahead to your doom."

"Well, well, little girl, then be out with it. What is the trouble? What danger am I in?"

Ruth stood up and walked over to him. Looking him directly in the eyes, she said: "You are in danger of being found out."

He returned her direct look without a quiver, his only visible emotion being one of surprise.

CHAPTER TEN

A QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER

"DON'T talk in riddles, my child," Mr. Delmar finally said. "Be good enough to resume your seat, and tell me what you mean, in plain English. You are not doing a scene on the stage, you know."

"Oh, very well," she replied, sitting down again. "I don't like to butt in on nobody's business, but when I see a chance to save somebody trouble I do it, that's all."

"Very nice of you, I am sure; but that brings me no nearer to what you are trying to say."

"I seen you at the Gayety last night, Mr. Delmar," said Ruth, looking at him keenly to see the effect of her words. "You were waiting at the stage-door for Miss Faure."

At her words she burst into a loud laugh, which, however, she could see was forced. "I've hit him, all right," she thought. "Now to discover something."

"Well, of all things," he said, "so that's what the mystery is all about, is it? You saw me waiting at the stage-door for Miss Faure. Now, you are an imaginative sort of a child, aren't you? You immediately spun a little romance out of it. Why shouldn't I call upon Miss Faure if I wish, particularly as she is a very dear friend of my wife?"

"But she ain't!" cried Ruth quickly. "That's just where the trouble is. Your wife says she is a cat."

He sat up straight and gave her a penetrating glance. "What do you know of my wife, or her attitude toward Miss Faure?"

"A whole lot. Your wife is breaking her heart over your carrying on with Miss Faure, and you *must* be carrying on with her. If you ain't, why did you tell her a lie last night about being here in the office, when you were really with Miss Faure?"

"You damned little meddler!" he cried, springing up from his chair and confronting her. "So you have been spying on me, have you? How do you know so much of my business?"

"So, at least you admit it is the truth, anyway?" Ruth replied, still facing him calmly.

"What is it of your business, if it is?" he said, walking up and down the room excitedly. Suddenly he seemed to have an idea, as he turned around and faced her. "Suppose I am doing some legal work for Miss Faure, what then?"

"Why, that would be a different matter entirely—if that was it. But the funny part of it is, you ain't! If you was doin' woik for her, you'd have her come here to your office like anybody else; you wouldn't go chasin' after her in the middle of the night."

He sat down again, looking out of the window in an abstracted manner. Ruth watched him closely, as she thought: "No, I don't believe he is in love with her—it doesn't impress me that way now. And besides, there is only one portrait of her in this room, and that is not in a conspicuous place. There must be some other man in the case."

"How did you find out so much about my affairs?" he asked, after a while.

"By usin' my eyes, mostly. And besides, I called up your wife last night to ask about you."

"Well, of all the nerve!" he cried, simply astounded.

"Cute of me, wasn't it?" she said, giggling again.

"Damned cute of you!"

"I am awful slick in some things," she continued complacently, seemingly innocent of his wrath. "Sometimes I think I'd make a swell detective."

"Did you tell my wife I was with Miss Faure?"

"Oh, dear, no!" she said in a perfectly shocked tone of voice. "Do you think I'd make trouble for you like that?"

"I don't know what you'd do. I would like to know just what you are up to, anyway." He seemed very much puzzled. "Are you trying to blackmail me—is it money you are after?"

"Now, Mr. Delmar! What have I did to make you think such things of me? I feel terribly hoit! That's just what a goil always gets for tryin' to help folks. Always misunderstood. Gawd!"

"Well, what do you want? Are you a friend of my wife, and butting-in on her behalf? I didn't know she had any friends among the theatrical profession."

"No, I ain't a friend of your wife's, and I ain't your friend—I ain't nobody's f-f-friend!" She began to sob a little. "To think I came to help you, a-and you won't even l-l-listen to me—boo-hoo-hoo!"

"For heaven's sake, child!" he cried, bending over her. "Do stop, and please put the soft pedal on your sighs. I don't want my clerks to think murder is being done in here."

For some unknown reason she stopped and arose from her seat. Opening her hand-bag, she drew out and handed to him the letter he had received from Faydette.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, greatly disturbed at sight of it."

"Your wife gave it to me."

"My wife—again! Say, just what have you been up to?"

"Mr. Delmar," she said, suddenly dropping her chorus girl manner and speech, "I want to know why Miss Faure wrote that letter, and who is the gentleman whom she described as being too youthful to suit her fancy?"

He noticed the sudden change in her manner, as he an-

swered: "I am sure that is none of your business. And furthermore, I do not think you are exactly what you appear to be. You exhibit altogether too much ingenuity for an ordinary chorus girl. Who are you?"

"I am Ruth Raven, by profession a detective."

At her words he dropped helplessly into his seat. "Oh, so that settles it! I believe my wife did tell me you were working on the case of Mr. Chalmer's murder. Well, what are you going to do—accuse me of it?"

She sat down again. "I am not going to accuse any one of it just yet. But you are hiding something. I do not know if it is in connection with his murder or not. Miss Faure is also mixed up in it—the two of you know something. You might just as well tell me now, as you may be sure I will discover it in the end anyway, as long as I have that much of a clue to work on."

"It seems to me that you have discovered a great deal already, Miss Raven. I was very angry at you a moment ago, when I did not know who you were. However, now that the question of your identity is settled, I feel differently, as I understand your motive. I really know nothing that would help you in discovering the murderer. If I did I would gladly tell you. I do not know if Miss Faure knows anything about it or not. You make a mistake in thinking I am her lover. I know I am weak where women are concerned, but I do not care for actresses—I never did. They are too fickle."

"I surmised that you were not in love with Miss Faure. But why do you visit her or write her letters? Is there another man concerned?"

"There is."

"Then tell me who he is."

"As I said before. I am willing to tell you anything or do anything that will help you in this case: but what you ask me has no bearing on it whatever. It is my own personal affair."

"Anything that is in the slightest way connected with this matter has a bearing on it, and the smallest details sometimes lead to the greatest consequences. I again ask you the name of the man you are shielding."

"I am not shielding any one. The man I mean has nothing whatever to do with this matter."

"Then you will not tell his name?"

"No. It is a duty I owe the dead," he said quietly, and almost with reverence. "I must do it to preserve a promise made the dead."

"Do you refer to Mr. Chalmers?"

"I cannot tell you to whom I refer, Miss Raven. My lips are sealed—I am not free to speak." Ruth observed that he spoke with deep feeling, for his voice shook with emotion.

"Don't you know that if I had you up before a judge, you'd have to tell everything, whether you wanted to not?"

"There is no judge who could make me tell," he answered quietly. "At least, no human judge. God Almighty, the Judge Supreme, knows and understands. That is enough. I am afraid you are surprised at my showing this side of my nature; it is a side few people know I possess; but your question touched upon a matter very painful to me—opening a grave and awakening the dead, as it were."

"I am sorry," said Ruth, preparing to go. "I am deeply sorry to have distressed you, Mr. Delmar. I have learned a few things, though not what I wished. I have one favor to ask of you. I trust that you will not reveal my identity till I am finished with this case. It is as much to your interest as mine to discover the murderer of Mr. Chalmers, surely. If you let them know at the theater who I really am it will only delay me, but will not discourage me—for I am bound to see the thing through, now that I have undertaken it—so you would really gain nothing in the end."

"Have no fear; I have no intention of spoiling your plans. One thing I wish, however: if you should discover anything relating to my own personal affairs which I have mentioned, I ask that you come to me first before making the matter public, will you?" He put the question anxiously.

"Yes, I will. I give you my promise."

"Thank you," he said blandly, as he bowed her out of the room.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

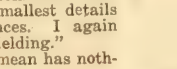
MORE MYSTERY

AFTER Ruth had been engaged at the theater a while she went home one night to her own apartment to get some necessities in the way of clothing.

"Well, Rosie," she said to her faithful servant, "things are getting interesting. Look at these."

"Foh de lan' sakes, Miss Ruth!" exclaimed the colored girl, viewing the bits of cipher which Ruth held out for her inspection. "What is dat?"

"That is a cipher, Rosie. You see this large circle. In the first place, that little circle in the center stands for the letter 'A,' and if you want a 'B' you put a dot in the middle of it. And now, see those lines crossing the circle at different angles, dividing it into sections? Well, each one of those sections stands for a letter, of course. Those two heavy lines, forming a cross, are guide lines. Now, for instance, I will write your name. First, I want the letter 'R,' so I take the section containing the 'R.' You will notice that 'R' happens to be the second letter in the section, hence I put in a dot to distinguish it from the 'Q,' which is the first letter. Then I take the 'O,' and for the letter 'S' I do likewise, only closing the section to show that the letter above and outside the section is meant. Then I take the 'E,' and there is your name," handing the girl a scrap of paper on which appeared the following:



Rosie caught the idea, but still seemed puzzled. "But, Miss Ruth, why is some of de lines so heavy?"

"Those heavy lines are the guide lines," she explained. "Otherwise it would be difficult, unless one were extremely careful, to tell an 'E' from a 'G,' for instance. Those heavy black lines must always be directly horizontal or perpendicular—I mean absolutely straight across or straight up and won. Is that clear to you, Rosie?"

"Yes, miss, very. But how in the worl' did you figure it out?"

"Oh, any one could not have failed at once to recognize the cipher key, after having seen a specimen of the cipher, and it is only a moment's work to study out the idea."

"May I have this one, Miss Ruth?" asked Rosie, somewhat sheepishly. "Mah gen'leman frien' has a sister who is always readin' mah lettahs. Now, if I——"

"I see. You would like to write them in cipher. Yes, you may have a copy of the key. But I must keep the original. Now, let me read what is written on the torn sheet I found in Mr. Chalmers' library table."

She left the parlor for a few moments, returning with an oblong tin box, which Rosie recognized as being the receptacle of all matters pertaining to whatever case she happened to be working on. She seated herself at the table and took from the box the bit of paper. The deciphering was but the work of a moment, and she spelled out the words:

"Pretty girl in ——
Second in front. Put——
in bouquet ——
Georgette LeVere ——"

"Oh, so Mr. Chalmers evidently was mixed up in the LeVere matter. So was Miss Faure. And now, the question is, who has the other half of this paper?"

She remained for some time with her brows drawn into a deep frown, then she slowly and carefully put the various bits of paper together into the tin box and withdrew to her bedroom.

Meanwhile, Rosie sat down comfortably and wrote a long letter to her "gen'leman frien'," laboriously copying it out in cipher and mailing it to him. She obligingly enclosed the key so as to enable him to read it—remembering an hour later that any curious person who happened to open it could do likewise.

Ruth was awakened the next morning by a loud knocking at her bedroom door.

"Miss Ruth, Miss Ruth!" called Rosie's excited voice. "Foh de Lawd's sakes, wake up!"

"What is it, Rosie?" she answered, sitting up in bed.

"It's de mohnin' papah. Another murder."

"Bring it in."

Ruth read the announcement. Yes, another murder, and the victim poor Kitty Lovelace. Found dead in her bed that morning with the fatal messenger of doom in her hand—the accursed rose! Truly the instigator of these terrible deeds had a taste for paradox, choosing so fair and innocent an insignia for his fiendish work.

A large portrait of Kitty was on the front page. Suddenly a chance remark of Rosie's set Ruth thinking. Rosie was looking over her shoulder, examining the picture. "Do you know, Miss Ruth," she said, "with your wig on, dat could be your picture? She looks lak you."

"Yes, she did look like me," observed Ruth slowly. "Now that you mention it, she did. And we were both the same height and build, too. I wonder——" She was silent for a moment. "I wonder if the identity of Folly Fleurette is known, and the murderer intended me to be the victim? And was it some guiding angel that prompted me to come home last night, instead of remaining with Kitty, as usual. Perhaps if I had—— Poor girl!"

She read the article further. Toward the end it was stated that the noted philanthropist, Howard Craig, had offered a reward of ten thousand dollars to whoever could bring the murderer to light, inasmuch as the terrifying mystery of the Red Rose of Doom was growing to horrible proportions, and the victim in this case being a friend of his.

Ruth decided on one thing; if she had been intended as the victim instead of Kitty, then it would be wise for her to be careful in her movements hereafter, for if the murderer had failed this time he would be doubly careful next time. Still, she felt that she was at a most critical point now in her dealings with Faydette, and it would be foolish to give up her position at the Gayety in view of this fact. And yet it would be equally foolish to risk going back in her former disguise, if it were known to the mysterious monster who used the rose as the mute messenger of his wrath.

Ruth finally decided not to return to the Gayety. When one is twenty-eight, and successful, one does not court death, and she was no exception to the rule. Her detective training had made her courageous, but that is a vastly different thing from being foolhardy—a fact many human beings do not seem to know.

She again got out her box of clues, going over such evidence as she had gained so far.

"Well, now," she asked herself, "who is the murderer?" Whose picture was found in Mr. Chalmers' possession? Faydette's. Who possessed the key to the cipher? Faydette. Who was seen leaving the scene of Georgette's second disappearance? Faydette. And who was the lady who dropped her handkerchief on Mr. Chalmers' library floor? Faydette? Well, not likely; she would scarcely use a perfume of such cheap variety as the handkerchief contained. And her initial was no 'Z,' which would probably not have much bearing on the matter, anyway, in view of the fact that theatrical people change their names oftener than their wearing apparel in certain cases. Still, suspicion pointed to the star of the Gayety. Well, granted this being the case, what was her motive—jealousy? Possibly, though it did not seem likely, neither Georgette nor Kitty having been talented or beautiful enough to arouse such a state of mind on her part.

Imagine Ruth's astonishment to learn that evening that the management of the Gayety had been thrown into a panic; for, in the middle of a performance, Faydette had disappeared!

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE MISSING SECRETARY

YES, such was the case. Faydette had failed to appear for her cue at the opening of the second act, and the manager, going to her dressing-room, had discovered the room in disorder, as if a struggle had taken place, and not a sign of Faydette anywhere. She had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed her. A search of her apartment later showed nothing to indicate her whereabouts, or nothing to indicate that she had intended leaving. Everything was in its place, and her maid insisted that her mistress had no intention of doing anything unusual. Faydette had disappeared absolutely.

Ruth was very tired that night and went to bed early for the first time in several weeks. Her hopes for a good night's rest were destined to be shattered, however, for her head had scarcely touched the pillow when the doorbell was rung violently several times.

After a few moments Rosie's voice called: "Miss Ruth, there's a gen'leman heah to speak to you."

"What is his name?"

"Mr. Jasper."

"Harvey Jasper, Mr. Chalmers' secretary, as I live!" thought Ruth, as she hastily threw on a dressing-gown. "Missing since the day of the murder!" She called to Rosie: "Tell him I'll be into the parlor shortly." She paused for a moment to do some thinking. "I have been wondering about him. I wonder where he has been, and what he has to say?"

Mr. Jasper was seated in an arm-chair when Ruth entered the room, with his face buried in his hands in an attitude of deep dejection. She had time to study his appearance a little. His clothes were in very bad condition, considerably soiled, and in need of pressing. Evidently he had been "up against it," as the saying is.

"Well, Mr. Jasper," she said, seating herself opposite him, "what can I do for you?"

At the sound of her voice he started violently and looked up.

"His nerves are all on edge," she mentally observed, watching him. He was a young man, certainly not more than twenty-one, and very boyish-looking for that age. His face wore a haggard expression, and his bloodshot eyes glanced furtively around the room with a hunted look which was really pitiful in one so youthful.

"What are you afraid of, Mr. Jasper?" she asked.

He again started at the sound of her voice, as he answered: "Nothing. I am very nervous from——" He stopped suddenly.

"From lack of food, isn't that it?" she answered sympathetically, noticing the pinched look on his face.

"Yes."

She rang for Rosie, who responded immediately. "Rosie, will you see if you cannot fix up a lunch for Mr. Jasper immediately—no, no, Mr. Jasper," as he made a motion to protest; "you must eat something. Hurry, Rosie."

She again turned to him with a slight smile. "Now that is settled, tell me why you called."

"You are very kind, Miss Raven," he said politely. He seemed to be a young man of considerable refinement. "I am hungry—I have scarcely had a full meal since——"

"Since Mr. Chalmers' death, you were going to say?"

"Yes."

"Where have you been?"

"Hiding," he said; "hiding from the police."

"Hiding from the police! Why?" she asked. "Have you come to tell me that you killed Mr. Chalmers?"

"No. He was kindness itself to me; I would not have harmed him. I was very angry the morning I left him, and we had had a quarrel. My regret now is that I did not get a chance to apologize for the things I said."

"What did you say to him that you are so sorry for?"

"Nothing that is of any importance now, but still I wish I had not said them. He was like a father to me," he said with a sob in his voice, seeming in genuine grief over his late employer's death.

"Why did you fear that the police would arrest you?"

He glanced cautiously around once more then, leaning over close to her, whispered: "I cannot tell you. I suspect who the murderer is, and I was afraid he would make the police think I did it. I cannot tell you more; I am afraid."

"Afraid of whom?"

"The person I mentioned."

"Don't you know that you are doing a very wicked thing in holding back information that will lead to the murderer's conviction?"

"I cannot help it. I am afraid, I tell you. He is a very desperate man and would stop at nothing to gain his ends. Be careful yourself, too; if he knows you are working on this case and likely to apprehend him your life would be in grave danger."

"I am quite certain that it is already," she answered calmly. "I am quite certain that he has already made an attempt on my life, for I feel sure that I was intended for the victim, instead of Kitty Lovelace."

"Has there been another murder? I hadn't heard."

"Yes. Kitty Lovelace, a chorus girl, found dead in her bed."

He crossed over and, bending down, whispered excitedly: "Tell me, was there a red rose near her when her body was found?"

"There was."

"My God!" He almost reeled across the room and fell into his chair. He buried his face in his hands and rocked himself back and forth in mental agony as he moaned over and over again, "God forgive me! I didn't know—I didn't know!"

"Be calm, Mr. Jasper," she said soothingly. "Here is Rosie now, with a lunch for you. You must force yourself to eat something. You need to keep up your strength, you know."

Rosie placed the lunch on the table beside him, and he did not wait for another invitation, but started to eat ravenously. When he had finished he turned to Ruth, saying: "Thank you very much, Miss Raven. No doubt you wonder why I came here to-night?"

"Well, yes; I am rather puzzled. Would you mind telling me?"

"I came to ask about Faydette—I mean Miss Faure. She has disappeared, and no one seems to know where she has gone."

"Yes, that is so."

"You have not heard—you have no inkling?" he asked anxiously. "Do you think anything has happened to her?"

"It is impossible to say—let us hope not. Was Miss Faure a friend of yours?"

At her words he blushed somewhat, and half-stammered a reply: "Yes, she was a friend of mine."

"A close friend?"

"Not so close as I wished. I wanted her to marry me."

"Aha!" thought Ruth. "I wonder if you are the——" She spoke aloud: "Is Mr. Delmar also a very close friend of yours?"

At the mention of Mr. Delmar's name he gave her a most searching glance, as he answered: "Yes, I know him very well."

"I see. Miss Faure did not look on your suit with the favor you desired, and you appealed to Mr. Delmar to help you, isn't that it?"

"Who told you I asked Mr. Delmar to help me?" he asked.

"I see I was right, after all," she said, half to herself. "How I found out about your affair with Miss Faure is of no consequence. I am a detective and accustomed to find out things for myself. What did Mr. Delmar think of the matter?"

"He did not approve of it. He does not like actresses, and tried to discourage me at first, but when he saw I was determined in the matter he consented to help me."

"I did not know that you and Mr. Delmar were such close friends. You must have a great deal of confidence in him to confide such a delicate matter to his keeping. How is that?"

"I cannot tell you."

"I called on Mr. Delmar some days ago, in reference to a letter he had received from Miss Faure," Ruth stated; "I asked him who the man was that he was interceding for, but he would not tell me—offering by way of explanation the cryptic remark that he was not free to speak, owing to a promise made the dead. Do you know what he meant by that?"

"Yes, I think I do, but I cannot tell you, for I, too, must keep a promise made the dead."

"Well, I will not press you," she said. "I do not see the need of creating all this superfluous mystery; the matter is quite complicated enough as it stands. But I do not think either you or Mr. Delmar are doing right in holding anything back."

"I am sorry, Miss Raven, but it cannot be helped. A promise made to the dead is sacred and must be kept."

"Any promise is sacred, of course," said Ruth, somewhat impatiently, for she had little respect or use for conventional superstitions, "whether it is made to the living or dead. But there are cases where promises should not be kept, when they interfere with the ways of justice."

"I do not care to discuss the matter further, Miss Raven. Pardon me if I seem lacking in courtesy, for I really would like to help you. The promise I refer to has nothing to do with the case, and I do not think would help you any if you knew it."

"And you will not tell me the name of the man you suspect as being the murderer?"

"No, I am afraid."

"Do I know him? Have I ever met him?"

He hesitated slightly, then aswered: "I do not think you have ever met him." He arose. "I see I am only taking up your time, for I have told you all I can. I came to find out about Miss Faure. I am deeply in love with her—no, no, it is no mere boyish fancy. I love her, and I want to marry her. Will you help me find her?"

"If I discover any trace of her I shall let you know—provided I can find you. Where are you going?"

"Back to Newark, where I have been hiding. I cannot tell you where. I do not want any one to know where I am. I trust you, Miss Raven. I implore you, do not tell any one of my whereabouts!" He did not wait for an answer, but suddenly opened the door. "I will call again in a few days to see if you have found anything in reference to Faydette. Good-by." He was gone in an instant.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A PRISONER

"WELL," thought Ruth, upon arising the following morning, "this case is very confusing. I don't know what to think. My brain is in a muddle over the whole thing. I think I'll take the morning off and go for a ride."

Despite the fact that the sky was overcast and foreboding, she was soon motoring down the street. Ruth's favorite drive was up Fifth avenue to the park, and then farther on uptown. She had been in the habit of taking an hour's ride every morning, but the past few days had found her too busy for such relaxations.

There was a certain house on West 142d street that had always held considerable interest for Ruth. There was really not much about it to arouse such an interest,

but she always looked long and carefully at it. It was a large brick house of three stories, somewhat countrified in aspect, being surrounded by several hundred feet of grass-covered land, thickly dotted with trees. The blinds were always drawn closely, and still the place had the look of being occupied, and once Ruth had fancied she beheld a sinister-looking face peering at her from behind one of the windows with anything but a friendly expression.

However, this morning she was greatly surprised to see one of the front windows wide open, and a hand beckoning at her from within. She was at a loss what to do for a moment.

"Now, what is some one up to?" she asked herself, as she stopped her car, suspiciously scanning the wildly beckoning hand. "Well, I have my pistol in my hand-bag. I think I'll take a chance."

She alighted with her satchel clutched tightly in her hand, her adventure-loving blood surging madly through her veins. She ran quickly up the front steps and rang the bell. A sound of rapidly moving footsteps was heard inside, and the door was thrown open. The hallway inside was very dark, and she could just distinguish a woman's figure standing within.

"What is the trouble?" Ruth asked, fingering her bag suspiciously.

"Come in and I'll tell you," whispered the woman with great secrecy. "You're the detective, Ruth Raven, aren't you? Well, you are just the one I want."

"Yes, I am Ruth Raven," she replied, taking a step inside. Immediately the door was shut with a bang and she was seized roughly from behind by some one of wonderful strength, for she struggled in vain to free herself. Her hand-bag was snatched from her, while a rough masculine voice whispered in her ear:

"Well, I've got you at last, you pretty young she-devil."

She was dragged down the hall a few feet, then a door was opened by the woman who had enticed her into the place. A flood of gas-light from the open door now fell upon this woman, revealing the witch-like undisguised countenance of Anna Williams.

"Well, I am a simpleton!" thought Ruth. "Actually taken in by that boob." Her feeling of disgust for her own stupidity far exceeded her sense of fear as she was being assisted into the room—with none too much gentleness—by her unseen escort.

She was freed at last, as the door closed behind her, and she heard the lock snap into place. She immediately turned, but Mrs. Williams was still in the room, standing by the locked door, gazing at her with undisguised and concentrated hatred.

"Oh, yes, you're caught, you sneaking, meddling angel-face!" she sneered, as she stood, with folded arms, contemplating Ruth. Then she let forth a perfect volley of imprecations and epithets, finally ending with a shriek and an earnest wish that the devil would begin pointing his pitch-forks for Ruth at once, for she soon would be his for keeps.

"Well, you have expressed yourself like a perfect lady, haven't you?" replied Ruth, considerably amused at the tirade in spite of her serious predicament. "You'd better put a muffler on those quiet refined tones of yours if you don't want the chief of police and his entire reserve here inside of five minutes."

Ruth turned her back and began to examine her surroundings. The room seemed to be fitted up for a bedroom in a cheap style, a small iron bed occupying one corner.

"Now, dearie, I'll leave you to amuse yourself," cooed Mrs. Williams in mock society talk, as she made a grimace intended for a society smile. "I hope you'll sleep real nice and comfortably to-night. So sweet of you to call—quite chawming." She paused at the door and made a courtesy. "What time in the mawning would you like your bawth, and pray, tell me, do you like milk or cream with your coffee—pawdon me, I mean caffee-ah-late or caffee-et-nawr?"

"Cafè a lait," she replied with sarcasm, "about the color of your complexion, I should say. And pray, do not bother about the bath, or take it yourself—with my best wishes for your survival after the long-deferred event."

The door closed with a bang, and left alone, Ruth hastily examined every nook and corner of her prison. There was one window in the room, which was covered by a long green shade. Upon raising this she found the window protected from without by iron bars. The atmosphere in the room was musty, and she lifted the window to let in fresh air. There was no possible chance of outside help; she could scream herself hoarse without being heard, and seeing the project useless, resolved not to try it for fear of arousing fresh antagonism on the part of her unknown host.

She was standing by the window, gazing out, when the door was opened again, and back came Mrs. Williams. In her arms she bore a large bunch of beautiful red roses, which she placed on a small table, remarking: "Few people get their flowers before they die, do they, dearie?" looking at Ruth with her hideous grin. "And take it from me, dear, you'll be as dead as a doornail by this time to-morrow. God rest your poor fool soul, amen," and laughing hilariously at her own sacrilegious joke, she withdrew, locking the door after her.

Ruth could easily have overpowered her, thus making her escape from the room, but she knew that this would be only a fruitless effort, as well as a stupid one, for the woman's accomplice, the man who had dragged her into the room, was most undoubtedly on guard outside, and the slightest call from Mrs. Williams would probably bring him to the scene.

She stood looking at the roses, wondering just why they had been placed there. Surely the old woman had some reason, some motive, for bringing them.

She went over to the bed and sat there, every nerve in her body tense with excitement. She resolved to watch carefully for developments. And just then, as if sent by Heaven to aid her, a little visitor came buzzing into the room. A bee, probably drawn by the scent of the flowers, flew in through the open window, settling at once on one of the roses. It rested there for a second only, then fell off the flower on the table—dead. A few moments later another bee came soaring in, immediately alighting on the flowers, from which it fell lifeless almost instantly.

Like a flash then she saw through it all—the mystery surrounding the murders was partially laid bare. The roses, then, were poisoned, as had been the others found with the dead victims. So that was how the poison kapestri was administered to Mr. Chalmers and poor Kitty Lovelace. The murderer, after inoculating the rose with this deadly fluid, placed it—by means as yet unknown—in the hands of his intended victim, relying on the latter's inevitable and almost instinctive desire to smell the scent of a beautiful flower—and one inhalation of the fatal poison was all-sufficient.

"And so that is to be the means of my death," she reflected, as she gazed at the flowers. Her brain was busy, trying to form some means of outwitting her enemies. She sat there for some time, when once again the door was opened, this time very cautiously, and Mrs. Williams again entered the room. She looked considerably disappointed at beholding Ruth still among the living, but said: "I came to see if you'd like something to eat."

"I am quite sure you wouldn't give it to me, if I did," Ruth answered calmly. "In any case, I'd be afraid to take it—if not poisoned it would certainly be unsanitary." She was determined to put up a brave front in spite of all. Moreover, she resolved to give no hint that she was aware of the real reason for the presence of the roses. At these Mrs. Williams glanced several times.

"Those are pretty roses, aren't they, dearie?"

"Very," answered Ruth, arising from the bed and going a step nearer to them. Mrs. Williams closed the door, and then went over closer to the table.

"Did you raise them?" Ruth asked.

"Yes." The old woman stooped over to adjust the vase. Ruth saw her opportunity. She quickly sprang up behind her, and before the woman knew what was happening her hideous face was being pushed down into the poisoned flowers. She struggled for only a second, then Ruth felt her whole body become limp, and she sank helplessly to the floor.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"CAUGHT"

THE thing had happened so quickly that Ruth scarcely realized what she was doing for the moment—it seems that the body works independently of the mind in such cases. Neither was she given much time to consider matters, for immediately the sound of heavy footsteps fell on her ear. Quickly arising from the floor, she turned toward the door, waiting—breathless, alert. Soon the door was pushed open and a man entered the room cautiously. He was a large, powerfully built man, but his face was concealed by a mask. He stopped short, evidently not expecting to find what he saw.

"Well, I'll be——" he exclaimed, as his eyes fell on the prostrate body of the woman on the floor. "You young devil, what have you done to my mother?"

Ruth did not answer, she was busy trying to plan a means of escape. Truly, her last hour seemed at hand now, for he drew a pistol from his pocket and pointed it at her. However, he did not seem anxious to end the interview so soon, but stood watching her in a menacing attitude. Finally he laughed. "So, I've got you at last, you meddler. I made one mistake before, but I will not make a mistake this time. Now, why couldn't you mind your own business, you poor fool? You were well enough off as it was; why did you undertake the impossible? Wanted to know who murdered Chalmers, eh? Well, I'll tell you. I did! And you will be the next."

As he stood there, taunting her, she was quickly forming her plan of defense. She knew it would be useless to waste words on him, though it would have been a tremendous relief to her feelings at the time. There was no doubt that she was dealing with a desperate character, whoever he might be, and his intention was perfectly obvious. Moreover, she was fully aware of the fact that she was not a woman painful to behold, by any means, and there was no telling to what indignities she might have to submit before death, which in all probability by that time would be welcome.

She suddenly began to totter, closing her eyes in assumed faintness, then she toppled forward in a dead swoon—to all appearances.

"Well," he exclaimed, "so you haven't got so much nerve after all, it seems—you're scared to death."

Evidently thinking she would stay where she was for the moment at least, he laid the pistol on a chair and turned around to give his attention to the woman he had termed his mother. He had scarcely turned his back when Ruth was upon her feet with the pistol in her hand.

"Hands up!" she cried.

He wheeled around, so astonished that he was speechless for a moment.

"Hands up, or I'll fire!" she commanded.

He obediently put up his hands. "You win," he said slowly. "You're some little pretender, all right; I've got to hand it to you. You had me completely fooled——"

"Cut it out," she said curtly. "Flattery will get you nothing. I know it will unnerve most women to be praised, but my training has made me slightly different—moreover, I am anxious to find out just who you are, so must ask you to relieve my suspense by removing your mask."

"You must excuse me," he replied. "I really can't do that. I have always worn a mask when engaged on risky work, and I am extremely anxious to preserve my incognito."

"Very well, I give you one more chance. I've got you—I'd rather take you alive than dead—however, the latter will answer better, I believe. You really ought to die, you know. Will you remove your mask?"

"Oh, well, all right." He snatched it from his face, and threw it on the floor, cursing.

"For the love of——" she exclaimed in utter amazement. "Of all persons—you! Well, I might have known it. I never knew a person of your reputation yet who did not turn out to be a hypocrite in the end. You were altogether too fond of advertising your charities. Now, what have you to say for yourself, Mr. Howard Craig?"

"Nothing," he answered sullenly.

"That will not do, at all," she replied sweetly. "There is a telephone in the hall—I saw it as I came in. You will kindly march in front of me to the phone—don't delay, now, for I mean business. I should really hate to harm you myself, much as you deserve, for I have not grown so much accustomed to taking human lives as some people."

Her manner was thoroughly convincing, which he must have seen, for without a word he did as he was told.

"Now, I see you know where you stand. Pick up the receiver. Call Spring, 3100—that's police headquarters, but don't let the fact disturb you. When you have them let me know. So soon? All right. Ask for Sergeant McCarthy. Got him? Good. Tell him to come here at once, that Miss Raven has the murderer of Chalmers and Kitty Lovelace. That is all; hang up."

Like most criminals, however reckless or daring, he was thoroughly cowed when overpowered. Bravery is seldom a part of the born criminal's make-up, contrary to public opinion; in the presence of conscious, absolute danger, he frequently shows a white feather, though at times presenting an appearance of desperation which might pass for courage, derived from the fact that he is not always intelligent enough to grasp a hazardous situation. However, Howard Craig did have brains—he knew perfectly well that the game was up, for the present at least. Whatever might happen in his favor was still in the future—he resolved to submit with a good grace for the present.

The half-hour which elapsed before the arrival of the police seemed hours to Ruth, for she was by no means as self-possessed and fearless as her appearance indicated. She was fully aware that she was dealing with perhaps the most hardened and vicious character the world had known for some time, and she kept her eyes on him constantly, firmly resolved to pull the trigger of her pistol at the slightest move.

She breathed a sigh of relief as she heard the doorbell ring.

"Come in at the open window," she called. "The door is locked. Do not go near those roses on the table."

A few moments later the large and bulky form of Sergeant McCarthy appeared in the hallway. "So, and it's here ye are," he cried genially, his wholesome Irish brogue falling on her ears at the present time more pleasantly than any human voice had ever sounded before.

"Yes," she replied, laughing rather hysterically. Now that the crisis was past, she was beginning to feel nervous, after the manner of womankind since the days when Adam and Eve wrangled in the Garden of Eden—and Ruth was very much a woman in spite of her occupation. "Do you see whom I have captured?" she said.

"Howard Craig, the philanthropist!" exclaimed the sergeant. "And what's it he's been doin'?"

"Only murdering every one he fancied ought to die, I guess. An interesting pastime, no doubt, though scarcely one which you would think a philanthropist would care for. Sergeant, I wish you would take him off my hands. I have been severely tried in the last few hours and am really in need of rest. You can get a confession from him at headquarters. He has already told me that he is the murderer of the red rose."

"What, you don't mean that you've caught that monster?" cried Sergeant McCarthy in amazement.

"Yes, indeed. But don't ask me any questions just now—I really am too tired and worn out to talk. Take him away to headquarters, please—I must go home to rest. I will be down to-morrow to attend to things."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

THE PROMISE TO THE DEAD

RUTH was very glad to get home that afternoon. The morning's adventure had been a great strain, and she felt sadly in need of rest. The case had been a great tax on her nerves—any case was, in fact, for she tackled them all with the same tireless, unceasing, enthusiastic energy, scarcely taking any relaxation till the matter in hand was settled.

"Rosie," she said to her maid, after having taken a cold bath and eaten a hearty meal, "I am going to bed now, and under no circumstances am I to be disturbed till morning. You may call me at 7 o'clock to-morrow morning."

Her sleep was sound and unbroken, and she awoke much refreshed an hour earlier than she expected to. She did not arise immediately, but lay in bed thinking over the events of the last few days.

"And so that job is ended," she thought. "Well, I must say that it was a surprise to find that Craig was the murderer. The hypocrite! It's no wonder I have so little faith in human nature; I am continually being brought face to face with that type—some of the blackest and worst criminals I have caught have proven to be canting, religious church-goers. And Craig—offering a reward of ten thousand dollars for the apprehension of the criminal! That was a clever ruse on his part to disarm suspicion, now, wasn't it? Well, the joke will be on him after all, for I am going to get the ten thousand. It will be the first time in history, no doubt, a murderer paid the reward out of his own pocket for his own capture."

She finally arose and dressed. "I must go down to police headquarters," she said to Rosie a little while later. "Hurry and get my breakfast for me. To-day will see the end of this case."

"How's dat, Miss Ruth?" Rosie asked, as she hastily prepared the morning meal.

"Yesterday I caught the murderer of Mr. Chalmers."

"Foh de Lawd's sake, Miss Ruth!" exclaimed Rosie, dropping a plate in her excitement. "Who done it?"

"Howard Craig."

"You don't mean it—the vilyun! Well," she nodded her head sagely, "I suah is not de least surprise' dat you ketched him, Miss Ruth. I done says to myself when you started lookin' foh him—I done says 'Look out, you poo' white trash or niggah, whichever you is, you done got no chance now when Miss Ruth is on yo' track.'"

Ruth smiled at Rosie's compliment as she seated herself to a dainty breakfast, for she knew that there was no problem under heaven that Rosie did not believe she could solve. The colored girl worshiped her with the adoration which negroes always have for white people who treat them kindly.

"Good-by, Rosie," she said a few moments later, preparing to leave. "I am going down now to clear up the thing. Don't ask me any questions about it now, I haven't time to answer you. Anyway, you will be able to read a full solution of the mystery in this evening's paper."

She was just on the porch outside when three visitors came hurrying up to her, proving to be Mr. and Mrs. Delmar, and Jasper, the secretary.

"Miss Raven," cried Mrs. Delmar, "are you in a hurry? We have come to explain something."

"Well," replied Ruth, turning back and opening the door for them, "I am in a slight hurry, but can spare you a few moments. Step inside."

She did not remove her street wraps, but sat down on the divan to hear what they had to say. One thing was very evident—the Delmars seemed on very good terms with each other, and she noticed several loving glances exchanged between them, and their general conduct was what can only be adequately described as "mushy."

Mr. Jasper was looking much better, too; his eyes had a more hopeful expression than when she last saw him.

"When did you return, Mr. Jasper?" Ruth asked.

"Last night. Mr. Delmar happened to run onto me accidentally, and told me of Craig's capture. That is how I happen to be here."

Mr. Delmar arose and clasped Ruth's hand. "Miss Raven," he said warmly, "I wish to congratulate you on your splendid work in capturing Craig. You are a very brilliant and courageous woman."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Delmar, giving her an admiring glance. "You are a marvel! I never heard of anything like it in my life—fancy, taking that beast single-handed, a little frail woman like you. It's wonderful!"

"Is that all you have to say to me?" replied Ruth, smiling. "I appreciate your compliments, I assure you; but—how did you know Craig was caught?"

"The sergeant called me up last night and told me," said Mrs. Delmar.

"I see. Well, what is it you wish to say to me this morning?"

Delmar glanced hesitatingly at his wife, and then at Jasper. All three seemed to be at a loss for words, then Mrs. Delmar spoke up. "We wish to explain something to you, Miss Raven. It is only right that you should know it, after all the trouble we have put you to." Here she glanced at her husband, and motioned him to speak.

"Miss Raven," Delmar began, "you asked me the other day who was the man referred to in Faydette's letter? I believe you already know now, as Mr. Jasper here says he called on you the other night."

"Yes," she answered.

"When you asked me why I would not tell, I told you I was not able to do so, owing to a promise made to the dead. It is that promise I wish to explain."

"I wish you would, Mr. Delmar," Ruth replied. "Although it is quite true that I have discovered the criminal, still I am in the dark about many things in connection with the matter."

"Well, to begin with, I must go back a few years and tell you something of my own life. I had a twin sister once," his voice suddenly became unsteady and he stopped. His wife leaned over and patted him affectionately on the arm, as she said with a sympathetic smile:

"Go on, dear, tell her everything."

"I had a twin sister once," he continued. "There are only two women in my life I have ever really loved, regardless of what people think of me. One of them is my wife" (Mrs. Delmar sighed contentedly), "the other was my sister. Our mother died when we were both very young. Never were brother and sister more closely united than we two. As a small boy I was her willing slave, and when I became a man, we still were inseparable." He paused, deeply affected by the memory.

"I am listening, Mr. Delmar," observed Ruth.

"It was when we were twenty that the sad thing occurred. My sister became acquainted with a man, quite unknown to myself and my father. Unfortunately she fell in love with him, for he was a villain of the worst type. He persuaded her to elope with him. Poor Dorothy! Well, she did—and six months later she returned to us, a physical wreck—alone."

"Poor thing!" murmured Mrs. Delmar, with tears in her eyes.

"It seems he had treated her most cruelly—beaten her, starved her, and abused her terribly—and—and the saddest part of the whole thing, Miss Raven, is that he had deceived her with a mock-marriage—she was not a wife!"

"How you must have suffered," said Ruth; for despite the fact she was almost daily brought into contact with grief and suffering, the fact had only developed her sympathy to a greater degree.

"Yes," he replied, with a break in his voice. "How I suffered! How my heart ached when I saw her—her figure worn to a skeleton, her once beautiful face a mass of scars and bruises from his brutal treatment. And the worst is yet to be told, Miss Raven—she was destined to become a mother. Yes, three months later her child was born, and death mercifully took her from a world which had used her so cruelly."

"How my heart aches for that poor, poor girl!" exclaimed Ruth, her eyes filling with tears. "To me there is nothing sadder than to see a young girl's life ruined in such a way."

"On her death-bed she made me promise that I would care for her child—that I would bring him up to be a good man. She begged and implored me never to let the world know that this disgrace had befallen her. I promised, and I have kept my word. No one has ever known till now."

"And that is what you meant by a promise made to the dead?" Ruth asked.

"Yes. No one that had known her ever knew that she had a child. I took him away to another city and hired a woman to care for him. She was a widow, a woman of high moral character, and brought the child up as her own."

"And what became of him?" asked Ruth. "Surely you did not give him up altogether."

"By no means," he replied. "He is now before you—Mr. Harvey Jasper."

"Yes, Miss Raven," Jasper said. "Now you know why I also had to keep a promise made the dead, and you know why Mr. Delmar was so much interested in me, for he is my uncle. It was he who paid for my education and who secured for me the position as secretary with Mr. Chalmers, his father-in-law."

"Mr. Jasper, will you explain to me just what happened on the morning of Mr. Chalmers' death?" said Ruth.

"Yes, I can do so now without fear, as the murderer is caught. As you already know, I was very much in love with Miss Faure—am yet, in fact. I thought I had reason to be jealous of Mr. Chalmers, for he was paying attention to her—I don't know why, but he was, regardless of what Mrs. Delmar says or thinks. I am sorry, Mrs. Delmar, but that is the truth. I met Howard Craig at the theater. He was also an acquaintance of Miss Faure's, but I cannot say that she seemed very fond of him. He is a very shrewd man, and soon discovered that I was deeply in love with her. When he found out that I was Mr. Chalmers' secretary he was not long in discovering that I was rather jealous of Mr. Chalmers, too. He played a diabolical trick on me, Miss Raven, making me do a terrible thing which I will regret to the day of my death. He made me his unwitting and innocent accomplice in crime—for it was I who placed the poisoned rose within Mr. Chalmers' reach."

"You!" exclaimed Ruth, absolutely dumbfounded. Mrs. Delmar was sobbing, and Delmar was vainly trying to comfort her.

"Yes," continued Jasper, his face now white with pain. "Yes, I did. He told me if I would place the rose and a woman's handkerchief on the table there, that the maid would discover them and take them to Mrs. Delmar. At the time it seemed to me like an awfully stagey, far-fetched plan, but that is a peculiar thing about Craig—he has a dominating, almost hypnotic personality; he makes people do what he wants almost before they realize what they are about. He said that Mrs. Delmar would instantly create a scene with her father, for he told me that she was very much set against what she called 'wild women vampires,' and that she was already suspicious of her father."

"What a terrible lie!" cried Mrs. Delmar. "I never was suspicious of him—he was the most honorable man that ever lived, and I never doubted it for an instant."

"Of course," said Ruth. "Craig was only working to gain his own ends."

"Yes, that was it," said Jasper. "Well, I agreed to do it. He gave me the rose, and a girl's handkerchief, purposely soiled with theatrical rouge. I believe he obtained the handkerchief from one of the chorus girls at the Gayety—anyway, her name must have commenced with 'Z,' as that was the initial on it. So that night I placed the rose and handkerchief in the drawer of his writing-table in the library. I went to Newark for him the next morning on business, and that evening I learned that he had been found dead—poisoned. I do not know what made me think so, but I felt that the rose had something to do with his death—I could not account for it, but the idea still persisted. And when I heard about the death of the chorus girl, Kitty Lovelace, with a red rose found near her body, I was sure. I was afraid to come home for fear of Craig implicating and exposing me."

"You have paid dearly for your fit of jealousy," observed Ruth, watching him. "You say you quarreled with Mr. Chalmers before you left?"

"Yes. When I came into the library to get his orders for the day, he was holding Faydette's picture in his hand, looking at it. I knew he had been at the theater to see her, for Craig had told me so. I asked him what he was doing with it; he replied coldly that it was not my affair, and I said some nasty things—none of them meaning much, but I am sorry, for he was always very good to me."

Just at that moment the telephone rang, and Ruth stepped into the next room to answer it. She returned in a few moments, smiling pleasantly. Turning to Mr. Jasper, she said: "Well, Mr. Jasper, I have a great surprise for you. Faydette has been found."

"Yes?" he exclaimed, springing up from his seat joyfully. "Where?"

"In the house on 142d street, where I caught Craig. The sergeant just phoned me that a search of the house had been made. Imprisoned in an upper room were Miss Faure and the missing chorus girl, Georgette LeVere. They want me at headquarters right away. You three may come with me, if you wish."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE END OF THE RIDDLE

THERE was quite a little crowd in the sergeant's office when Ruth and her friends reached there, including several policemen, two newspaper reporters, Faydette and Georgette LeVere. Ruth noticed that the latter looked very pale and thin.

As Ruth and her party entered, the sergeant gave her a hearty cheer. "Three cheers for Ruth Raven!" he cried. "Congratulations!" She was very much surprised to have Faydette rush up to her and give her a warm hand-shake, as she said:

"Miss Raven, how I thank you! You do not yet realize the good you have done humanity in bringing Howard Craig to justice—you cannot know till you learn his full history. And to think you were in my company all the time as Folly Fleurette, and I didn't know you."

"Of course not," responded Ruth, laughing. "I would be a poor detective if I could not at least disguise my identity effectively." Crossing over to where Georgette LeVere was sitting, Ruth sat down on the vacant chair beside her, saying: "My poor child, you must have had a terrible time, imprisoned in that house with those wretches!"

Georgette seemed unable to say a word, but looked at her with round, frightened eyes.

"She is still terribly frightened, Miss Raven," said Faydette. "She is a nervous little thing, and has not yet recovered from the shock she has had."

"Where is Craig?" asked Jasper. At the sound of his voice Faydette turned around, and seeing him, rushed up to him and gave him an impetuous kiss. "Oh, my poor boy," she cried, "you have at last returned. I have missed you so."

"Do you really mean it, Faydette?" cried Jasper, his face lighting up. "Do you really mean it?"

She shook her finger at him playfully. "You foolish boy—still at it! Don't you know I am old enough to be your mother? Why, I am thirty-eight years old; I know I do not look it, but it's the truth. Don't be silly; you must get over it. Find a nice young girl. I will be your friend, that is all."

"Then you will not marry me, Faydette?" he cried, in disregard of the somewhat amused spectators; his grief was thoroughly boyish.

"Don't be foolish—in front of all these people."

He was about to protest again when the sergeant tapped him on the shoulder, as he said good-naturedly: "Sure, an' this is a foine place for spoonin' now, ain't it? Cut

out the blarney till afther. Now, ladies and gintlemen, if you will be seated agin' we will get down to business. Boys," he called to two husky young policemen standing near, "bring in Craig."

They ushered Craig in a few moments later. His wrists were encased in handcuffs behind his back. The sergeant placed a chair in the center of the room and Craig seated himself in it, with one policeman behind him and one at either side. As he did so, he caught sight of Ruth. "Well," he snarled, "I have you to thank for this, my dear young lady. I suppose you feel really happy now, don't you?"

"Very," replied Ruth sweetly. "I will also feel happy when I receive that ten thousand dollar reward you promised for the capture of the murderer. I should be glad if you would write me out a check for it at your earliest convenience."

"I'll see you in hades first," he said, with profound emphasis. "You'll get no check from me. I'll get the best of you that far."

"Oh, dear, no," she continued in her blandest tones. "The money will be turned over to me out of your estate. You needn't worry, however, for by that time you will have done your little bit in the electric chair and will not know the difference."

"Well," he continued, seemingly unphased by her reference to his fate, "you have brought me here to hear my confession, I suppose. All right, I'll make it—I'll warrant you have never heard anything like it before! No, even you, Miss Folly Fleurette. You see, I knew who you were, for I sent Faydette a warning in cipher which she did not have sense enough to understand."

"You refer to the line 'Beware of spies'?"

"Yes. Well, to begin with, my real name is Hafiz Sohmur. I am an East Indian of high caste—I have far better blood in my veins than any of you American upstarts here. However, I was always an independent sort of a person, and always had a propensity to do just exactly as I pleased. I must have inherited this trait from my mother, for when I was quite a boy my mother did something which incensed my father against her greatly, and he turned her out of the house. My general conduct was such that at his death I found myself penniless, for he left everything to his dead brother's daughter, a sixteen-year-old orphan. Her name was Zetelma Sohmur." He stopped to note the effect he was creating. His auditors sat silently waiting for him to continue.

"And so," he resumed, "it was up to me to find a means of making my living. The idea of working I considered absurd—I had been too long a man of ease to inconvenience myself in that way. However, I will say that Zetelma proved to be very generous in the matter, and offered to share equally with me. Needless to say, I accepted her offer. When my mother heard of my good fortune she returned and asked me to help her. Knowing it was exactly what my father would not have wished me to have done, I took her back into my home—purely out of contrariness, for I had no natural love for her."

"Not even for your own mother, you beast!" cried Mrs. Delmar passionately.

"No, not even for my own mother," he said. "I do not think I have experienced love for any living thing—I do not know the meaning of the emotion. At its best, it always seemed to me to be a very foolish sensation, and usually a most unprofitable one. In due respect to my mother, I will say that she did have more intelligence than my father; I am sure it is from her I inherit my brains. She came to mé one day, and said: 'How is it that you are so easily contented with only half your father's fortune, when you might have had it all?'

"I responded that I was glad to get any of it, when she replied: 'I have been thinking the matter over. You speak French very well—so do I. You know Paris like a native Frenchman. Why don't you induce Zetelma to go with us to France to study singing? You know she is perfectly foolish about music. When we get her there we will have her at our mercy, and we will soon have the money.'"

"You wretch!" cried Faydette, her black eyes ablaze.

His only answer was a low laugh, and he went on. "Well, we put our heads together, my mother and I, and before long we had Zetelma fully convinced that she had a wonderful voice. A few weeks later we found ourselves in Paris. Once there, our plotting was about done, for with Zetelma understanding very little of the language or the value of French money—not to mention her generosity in letting me have control of the entire fortune—we soon went through it all. As you know, there are many pretty women in Paris to spend money on, also my mother began to develop a taste for high-priced liquors which she indulged freely. So, just two years after landing in Paris, one morning we found ourselves almost at the end of our resources. Zetelma was very innocent. I invented some clever lies as to where the money had gone. I explained that we had just enough money to take the three of us to America, a land I had always wanted to see. We decided to come. We did."

Craig laughed again—evidently he found the story of his own escapades highly diverting. "Yes, we came to America. I assumed the name of Howard Craig, as I had an idea that my life henceforth was going to be a somewhat checkered affair, and I thought best to be under an alias. Zetelma understood English very well, having been reared by an English nurse. She had also learned how to sing in Paris, and she procured a theatrical engagement at once, taking the professional name of Faydette Faure, which she has made somewhat famous in the years since.

"The first few months I was here I devoted my energy to mastering the English tongue, my mother doing likewise, and before long we could speak it like native-born Americans, with all the slang thrown in. I purposely cultivated the American accent, as I wished to be taken for an American.

"I had been here about six months, when quite accidently I met an old friend of mine, a man with whom I had put over a few questionable deals in Paris. He confided in me that he was earning a princely income through a business which he called 'White Slave Traffic.' Knowing my disposition to be even more reckless than his own, he took me into the business. One thing I had against him, however—he was too cautious—afraid to branch out and do the thing on the large scale I wished. I wanted to send girls to the harems of Europe, where I knew they would pay fabulous prices for such beauties as I knew the American girls to be.

"Anyway, he died soon after—no, I did not kill him," as he noted the question in Ruth's eyes; "he died naturally. Then I resolved to go ahead and follow my own plans. I took my mother into my confidence, but not Faydette; I was afraid of her, knowing her to be too kind-hearted for such a project. My mother fell in with my plans most heartily; what I did not think of she did, and we made money. She helped me immensely—the Howard Craig Home for Working Girls being her idea. Through this establishment we came into contact with all sorts of girls, and had our choice of the most attractive ones, for I founded this Home for the sole purpose of bringing them under my observation. I got them into my power by different methods, which would not interest you. Perhaps I secured the most through a rooming-house which my mother kept for the purpose on Fourteenth street, from which I transferred them to a more secluded place up on 142d street. (You know where that is, Miss Raven.) From there they went to Europe. I had more trouble with this one here than any I ever had." He paused a moment, looking at Georgette LeVere. At his glance she cowered, and, trembling violently, buried her face in Ruth's shoulder.

"I think she must be Irish," he continued, "they were always the hardest to manage. Anyway, she was the most stubborn I ever saw! A fellow in my employ had been making love to her at the theater, but she insisted on being married to him by a certain priest she knew, which did not give him the opportunity of having a mock-marriage performed, which was the plan. Finally he induced her to take a room in my house at Fourteenth street. Un-

fortunately for our plans, however, she overheard a conversation between this young man and my mother, which told her everything. She created an awful disturbance. While the young man was trying to quiet her, my mother got busy.

"Now, I must explain a little matter. I have always had a great natural liking for chemistry, and have made a thorough study of it. In India, we understand much more of such things than you do here in America. It has served me well, too. At home in India we have an insect from which is obtained a deadly poison. This poison is known (by the few people who are aware of its exis'ence, by the name of 'kapestri,' after the insect which supplies it. I had brought a large quantity of it to America with me. It has the great advantages of being very easy to administer, acting instantaneously, and leaving absolutely no trace after death.

"As I stated before, while the young man was trying to quiet this girl, my mother called me on the phone and told me to come as quickly as I could. When I arrived and saw how matters stood, I decided that we were going to have a hard time with that girl, for she was like a little wildcat. I resolved that the best thing to do was to get her out of the way as quickly as possible—having learned what she had, she might get away and make no end of trouble. I was determined that she should die—she knew too much of my business. Most of my dealings were done in such a way that I believe my victims scarcely knew that I had anything to do with the matter. I had my mother procure a rose, which I inoculated with the poison kapestri. This I placed in the girl's bedroom. Then I told the young man to persuade her to go to her room and dress, and to tell her that he would take her back home.

"She pretended to believe him—she was a slick one. She did as he told her. I had figured that when she saw the rose lying on the bed she would pick it up to smell its scent—as that is almost an instinctive impulse for any one to have on beholding a beautiful flower. Instead, she was no sooner inside the bedroom than she let out a yell for help which you could have heard ten blocks away. Three minutes after there was a policeman at the front door, demanding to know what the trouble was. I do not know what would have happened if my mother hadn't kept him there, haggling with him till the young man and I had got her muffled and safely out at the back door.

"I had come down hastily in my car, which was standing close by in the street, and we had her in it and were flying up the street before the policeman had succeeded in getting into her bedroom—and finding the poisoned rose, which the poor fool did not know enough to have analyzed."

"One moment, Mr. Craig," said Ruth. "How did you know I was at the Gayety under the name of Folly Fleurette?"

"I had heard that you were working on this case, and knew that you had suspicions of Faydette, having found her picture in Chalmers' possession. So I sent my mother with a message to her in cipher, which she delivered into your hands. She was not sure, but she thought she recognized you—you see, you are not such an artist at make-up as you fondly imagine, and my mother always could use her head.

"It's a lucky thing for you, too, that my plans miscarried, for you were the intended victim when Kitty Lovelace was murdered. I was talking to the two of you at the Craig Home a short while previously, and at that time discovered that you were living with Kitty. I entered your room through a window one night. You will remember, your room at Twenty-eighth street was on the ground floor. Let me give you a pointer here—as a detective it should prove valuable—never take rooms on the ground floor; they are too easy of access. At the time I was quite surprised at this mistake on your part, though thankful for it. I had a rose prepared with kapestri and concealed myself under the bed. I heard some one come in, which proved to have been Miss Lovelace; but you and Miss Lovelace looked considerably alike, so I was not sure which it was. When she was fast asleep I placed the rose on her pillow and departed through the window. I knew that as soon as she awoke she would smell of it, and that was all that was necessary."

"Then you intended to murder Mr. Chalmers when you gave me the rose to put on his table?" said Jasper. "You wanted to implicate me!"

"I really did not care what happened to you; I do not think I gave that matter a thought," replied Craig. "But I did want to get Chalmers out of the way. Through some infernal investigations he had been carrying on (he was a reformer, you know) he had got suspicious of me, and I was worried. He knew of my relationship to Faydette, and was trying to pump her under the guise of making love to her, but he didn't deceive anybody—except you, you poor fool! How he found out so much is a mystery to me. He even knew about a cipher which I had invented for risky communications, and had in his possession part of a note which I had written to one of my men concerning Georgette LeVere, about a bouquet to be sent to her."

"Was Miss Faure in league with you?" asked Ruth.

"No, though she knew the cipher. It was only after the LeVere matter that she learned the truth, and then she was very hard to manage. Threatened to expose us to the police, and Lord knows what. She became so bad that I had my men take her forcibly from the theater one night and imprison her in my house at 142d street. I do not know what I should have done with her after that—probably shipped her to Europe along with the rest, I suppose, though she's not young enough to have much value that way. Previously, I had accounted to her for my sudden wealth by telling her I made it by speculation, but now she knew the truth. I guess you've heard about everything, now, people. It's an interesting narrative, isn't it?"

"It's the most villainous and rotten confession I have ever listened to, almost unfit to be heard," said Ruth, with feeling. "You are the most hardened wretch I have ever met in all my days as a detective! Your mother has already paid the penalty of her crimes, for she too fell a victim to your poisoned flowers. You will die by the electric chair, which is a great deal too easy for you. Who are the men you mentioned as being in your employ?"

"That is something you will never know—unless you find out for yourself," he replied. "I will never betray them—they worked for me, and trusted me."

"Did you plot to entrap me in your house at 142d street?" asked Ruth. "Whose plan was that?"

"My mother's. For some unknown reason she hated the very ground you walked on—I don't know why. She hated almost any honest woman. She knew you were in the habit of driving past there and waited her time."

"Take him back to his cell, men," ordered the sergeant.

Jasper took Faydette and Georgette LeVere by the hand, as he said: "Come, let us get out into the fresh air. The atmosphere in here is vile after such a story." As they followed him out into the hall, Craig looked after the three with an amused expression, finally bursting into a laugh when the door had closed upon them.

"I am sorry our young friend left so soon," he said. "He will miss the most interesting part of my confession. I purposely kept it till the last, as a sort of fitting end." Addressing Delmar, he continued: "Please give my son my parting blessing, will you?"

"What do you mean?" cried Delmar.

"Harvey Jasper is my son—I am the man who betrayed your sister!"

Delmar grew white to the lips as he sprang forward. "You accursed fiend," he yelled, "I'll——" The sergeant forcibly held him back.

"The law has got him," said the sergeant calmly, still holding Delmar back. "The law has got him, and he will pay the full penalty of his crimes. Ye'd better all be afther goin' now, people."

A truly remarkable feature story begins in our next issue containing a deep detective mystery.

THE HUMAN PHOTOGRAPH

By WILL H. GREENFIELD

IT was Duncan Kenilworth, the millionaire mining man, who first introduced me to Ashley Boody.

"Doctor Scott," he said earnestly, "if there is anything to be done for this man I want it done, if it costs every cent I own. And the papers do not exaggerate when they say I am worth several millions!"

Ashley Boody suffered from a condition that is called argyria by physicians. At the University Hospital, where I took my unusual patient for examination, he was known as the human photograph, because his skin was like a piece of sensitized photographic paper, which turns black in the sun.

"I don't want your money, Duncan," I told the mining magnate candidly. "Poor Boody's case has excited my deepest sympathy. He never told me how he came to drink such a quantity of lye water, but I know that it burned his alimentary canal so badly that it was necessary to make an incision in his abdomen and insert a tube into his stomach to feed him. To tighten the tube in his body he applied silver nitrate to his skin, under the impression it would contract the flesh and hold the tube in place. The silver nitrate mixed with his blood so that now, when his skin is exposed to the light, it turns black, just as photographic paper does. His face and body, being more exposed, are blacker than the other portion of his body, which is why the poor fellow is taken for a negro wherever he goes."

It was then Duncan Kenilworth told me the story that led up to Ashley Boody's affliction. Years before, Duncan Kenilworth, Ashley Boody and a man named Wilbur Gage, all mining engineers, were in the Colorado desert north of Needles. Caught in a terrific heat "blanket" while looking at mining properties, Boody volunteered to stay behind with Kenilworth, who had taken ill and could not keep up with the party. It was then discovered that their water had been poisoned with lye by Wilbur Gage, who wanted to gain sole possession of the valuable properties their trip had unearthed. Kenilworth was delirious, and Boody drank of every canteen until he found one that had not been tampered with. This he kept for Kenilworth, thus saving the latter's life. But when rescuers, carrying water, found them, Ashley Boody was the nearest to death's door.

Of course, Kenilworth brought his faithful friend back to civilization and sought a cure for him with every means that wealth could supply. But though he became almost strong physically, Boody remained "the human photograph," and, despite Kenilworth's protestations, took up his residence with an old aunt who lived alone in the poorer section of the city. Here he led the life of a recluse, seldom emerging from his room, which he kept in total darkness, and never leaving the house save at nightfall, and then only for brief journeys.

Mrs. Creedon, Boody's aunt, had been known as "Mary Catfish," and was as celebrated as the muffin man of English fame or the old chimney-sweep of Charles Lamb's time. The call, "Any catfish—any catfish!" had rung through the streets of the city for nearly half a century. Many remembered it mingled with their childish dreams, the shrill, piercing, long-drawn-out wail bringing the picture of a little woman, who always had seemed old, walking swiftly through back streets and alleys with a fish tray balanced on her head. But when Ashley Boody came to live with her she retired from business, for Duncan Kenilworth provided liberally for her needs, giving gladly of his wealth that her unfortunate nephew might have her care and companionship in his self-imposed seclusion.

I had visited Ashley at his home on several occasions, discussing his case with him in his pitch-dark apartment, and had twice persuaded him to journey with me in a closed cab to the University Hospital. After his last visit he seemed more than usually morose, and it cost me a severe pang of regret to tell him, as he entreated me to, that we were honestly unable to report the slightest progress.

"Doctor," he said in parting, "I don't want you to think I'm impatient, but if there is anything to be done, can't you kind of hurry things up? I'll tell you what I say that for. It's for Ken's sake. You know, Doctor, he worries more about me being a freak than I do, because I know a fellow can be white inside, no matter how black he is on the outside. Ken knows that, too, but he can't understand that there's some things even his millions can't bring about."

But the next time I saw Duncan Kenilworth, on a black, stormy night, about a week later, I had very little chance to say anything, for he came plunging into my office like a wild man, shaking an evening newspaper in his clenched fist.

"Have you seen the papers?" he cried hoarsely. "Look what they are saying about poor Boody! They say he murdered poor Aunt Mary Creedon!"

He began pacing up and down the room in a towering rage, while I took the newspaper from him and read:

"MARY CATFISH" DEAD IN HER HOME—POLICE SAY HERMIT NEPHEW IS THE SLAYER.

Do you remember the old woman who used to pass through the alley back of your house, yelling, with that peculiar, distinctive intonation, "C-a-t-fi-s-h"? You will never hear that cry again, for the old catfish woman is dead, murdered, the police say, by Ashley Boody, her eccentric nephew, who is known to the medical world as "The Human Photograph," because his skin is sensitized with silver nitrate and turns black in the light.

Shortly before noon Monday morning Officer Ryan heard cries of "Murder!" issuing from 2447 Corson street, and found Ashley Boody, of that address, bending over the bleeding form of Mrs. Mary Creedon, known to every man, woman and child in the city as "Mary Catfish." She was dying from two gaping wounds in the back of her head, and as Officer Ryan arrived on the scene she gasped, "Black villain—Ashley!" and breathed her last. Boody was covered with blood and sobbing as if his heart would break. He was promptly arrested.

Captain of Detectives Leonard has made out a strong circumstantial case against the prisoner. Boody's story is that he heard the front doorbell ring, and when his aunt answered it he heard her scream. Bursting from the darkroom to which his affliction has confined him, he

rushed downstairs to find his aunt lying in a pool of blood in the vestibule. He flung open the door, yelled Murder!" at the top of his voice, and took Mrs. Creedon in his arms as Officer Ryan came in.

Captain Leonard found bloody footprints leading through the hallway to the kitchen window. Boody admits that the shoes he wears, provided as they are with Callahan's rubber heels, fit the footprints, but attempts no explanation save that he always wears the one make of shoes and rubber heels, and has never bought or disposed of any shoes since coming to live with Mrs. Creedon. He says he did not run along the hallway upon discovering his aunt, and had not moved out of the vestibule when Officer Ryan appeared.

Mrs. Hamilton, a neighbor, living in the rear of the Creedon home, says she saw a black face pressed against a kitchen window pane about the time of the murder. The evening before, Mrs. Creedon had met her in a neighboring grocer's and exhibited a large sum of money. She told Mrs. Hamilton that Mr. Duncan Kenilworth, who provided lavishly for the little household because Ashley Boody had rendered him a service in his less prosperous days, had just sent her a large sum of money. She had added that the doctors' failure to aid her nephew had rather disheartened him, and that from the way he had talked of his adventures in the West she believed that he was contemplating a trip to Colorado.

Mary Creedon was a picturesque figure, and to some a pathetic one. To thousands of housekeepers in this city she was just a woman who sold fish; her name, age, and circumstances in life were unknown to her. To thousands of men and women who were not housekeepers she was just a voice. That voice is silent now, but the police present a formidable array of evidence to prove that they have in the toils the one who made it mute, and when the case comes to trial it is the opinion of criminal lawyers that no jury will be found to acquit Ashley Boody of the crime of murder.

There was a lot more of it—columns, in fact, with diagrams of the Creedon home and pictures of every person remotely connected with the case in whatsoever capacity, including an alleged half-tone of myself. But I had not the heart to read the whole of it, only going far enough to become candidly uncertain of poor Boody's ability to establish his innocence.

Kenilworth must have been reading my face, and in it my thoughts, for he broke out with:

"Are you going to be a parrot like the rest of them and squawk that things look dark for Ashley? Can you believe a man who could do what he did for me out in that Colorado desert—can you believe such a man could strike down his only living relative with—with some sort of a weapon?"

"There's a point that remains untouched," I said. "What was the weapon used, and where is it?"

"That's only one of the things I'm going to find out." His jaws snapped, his hands clenched. "Ashley saved me when that bewhiskered devil Gage left us to sizzle with poisoned water as our only relief, and I'm going to stand by him to the last ditch. Doctor, he's innocent! I don't care a damn who says he's guilty, I'm with him to my last cent, my last friend, and my last breath!"

"That's the talk, old scout!" I applauded. "I don't believe Ashley's guilty, and I want to aid you in whatever way I can."

"Then come with me to the murder scene!" he cried. "I want you to use your eyes, your common sense, and the logic of facts."

I had serious doubts as to our ability to penetrate the police guard and gain a survey of the gory premises on Corson street, but Kenilworth went ahead as if there could be no questioning of our right and privilege. The streets were full of a thin fog, and at corners a chill wind blew in spasmodic gusts, so we piled into a taxi and in ten minutes were deposited at the modest home of Mary Creedon.

Officer Ryan was on duty at the door. He was a smooth-shaven, large-boned man, with big and rather foolish-looking blue eyes, and he seemed at first to be inclined to challenge our authority. But Kenilworth rode, or rather walked, right over him.

"My name's Kenilworth," he rapped out. "Friend of the family here. Captain Leonard knows me."

There was no mistaking the determined, self-satisfied Crœsus before whom everyone bent the knee. The quick, sharp speech, the positive movements, the keen eye which seemed to note everything—all these marked one accustomed to directing events as he willed them.

"Go on in," said the policeman quietly. "Hardly anything has been disturbed. I know you, all right. Take your friend in with you."

The examination we made of the Creedon house, aided by electric flashes, we found in the kitchen, might have been thorough, for all I know. In fact, I know that Kenilworth acted like lots of sleuths I had read about and a few I had seen. As for me, a thought sprang into and occupied my brain to the exclusion of everything else the moment I looked at the kitchen window. Mrs. Hamilton saw a black face peering through this pane, did she? Why, it then occurred to me in a flash that this neighbor woman couldn't have seen Ashley Boody, for I knew as a physician that poor Boody, leaving his darkroom, had not been exposed to the light long enough to change color.

The elation that followed this deduction held me breathless and useless while Kenilworth covered the house like a veritable bloodhound. So professional was his manner that I was rather disappointed that he failed to produce a microscope and tape measure.

I was out at the vestibule door ahead of him when he finally ceased operations and broke up the conversation I had inaugurated with Officer Ryan.

"I believe I'll advertise in to-morrow's papers for the man who did this job," he said lightly. "Officer, you are sure you heard Mrs. Creedon rightly?" His face was flushed with a sort of triumph, and his eyes were burning bright.

"I heard Mrs. Creedon distinctly," said the policeman slowly, like one who picks his way, "and she said 'Black villain—Ashley!' I wasn't mistaken. I wouldn't say that if I hadn't heard it—I couldn't have said that if I hadn't heard it."

"No, I don't believe you could. But did you notice Boody's color, Ryan?"

"I thought he was a negro, he was that black."

"That's bad—very bad for Boody. Come, Doctor, we'll be going. Good-night, Officer Ryan."

Back in my office, with the rain beating a wild tattoo against the window pane, I faced Kenilworth with a huge, oleaginous smile. A slowly mounting sense of exhilaration crept through me. Then I told him, not without preamble and flourish, the idea that had pricked me in the kitchen of the Creedon home.

"Well, what can we make out of that?" he demanded. "The only person who knows whether Boody had been staying in his room cannot give her testimony, and a man capable of murdering his mother's sister might have been committing numberless crimes in broad daylight to the lasting shame and detriment of the colored race. Couldn't Captain Leonard point out that a cunning fellow with Boody's affliction would flood his room with light so as to disguise himself as a negro before setting out to kill Mrs. Creedon?"

He spoke in a stern, level voice, as if addressing a delinquent servant, and when he saw that I didn't like it a little bit he flashed on me one of his rare smiles and continued in soft, patient tones:

"When we get to see Boody he can tell us whether he was black or white. In the meantime, Ryan's testimony and the footprints in the hall are enough to send him to the chair. You didn't notice those footprints in the hall, did you? They were made by Ashley's shoes, I'll admit, because I have always purchased his footwear and I know the shape and make. In fact, I have bought almost all his wearing apparel since he has been under my care."

"If the footprints were made by Ashley, why did he deny that he had left the vestibule to go back to the kitchen?"

"I said the footprints were made by Ashley's shoes, but Ashley wasn't in them. The footprints all point toward the kitchen—there are none pointing toward the front door. If Ashley was in the shoes he did not return from the kitchen, and there's no bloody trail to mark any other route to the vestibule. Yet Officer Ryan found Ashley there with his aunt in his arms."

I glanced admiringly at Kenilworth and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thanks to your cleverness," said I, "a happily different tale can be told now, and——"

"Not so fast, Doctor. We are still in the heart of the woods, and before I go any farther I'm going to use your telephone. I want to speak with Captain Leonard and learn the latest developments."

He seated himself at my private 'phone, called Police Headquarters, and in a minute he had Captain Leonard on the wire. Thinking I might retard his thoughts by distracting his attention from the matter in hand, I withdrew to my inner office and picked up a book.

Kenilworth talked over the wire for more than half an hour, and it was after midnight when he called out to me: "Ho, Doctor, asleep?"

I walked into his presence stifling a yawn, but his first words brought me up with a jolt, wide awake and tingling with anticipation.

"I believe they have caught the murderer of Aunt Mary Creedon," he said imperturbably. "I asked Captain Leonard to ask Boody just one question for me, and he did. It was: 'How long was it since you left your room before you ran downstairs and found Aunt Mary?' Boody's answer, relayed to me by the obliging captain, was: 'I hadn't been out of my room for over a week—at least one week, anyhow. And then it was with Doctor Scott.'"

"That's right, Duncan," I cut in. "He's telling the truth there."

"As he has told it everywhere, Doctor, if I'm any judge. Well, that convinced me, atop of my conviction, that Boody was an innocent man. So I asked Leonard if he had thought to look for the weapon with which the murder had been committed. 'Didn't have to look,' he answered, 'for a motorman by the name of Grosvenor brought it to headquarters thirty minutes after the crime was committed. It is an iron furnace raker about nine inches long and weighs seven pounds. It whizzed past Grosvenor's head and dropped to the front platform. His car happened to be passing the Creedon house, you see, and when Boody opened the door to scream he tossed the thing away. Ryan says he saw him fling out his arms, but had no idea he was disposing of such bloody evidence.' Then he went on to say that the motorman could not see who threw the raker, because it came skimming over the top of an ash wagon that stood near the Creedon home, and they have arrested as a witness a negro by the name of Barnes, who was removing ashes from the house a few moments before the murder was committed. At my suggestion, Captain Leonard examined the negro's shoes and found them, as I told him he would, a pair of eight dollar Walkspeeders, with Callahan rubber heels. Before I hung up I think I had the captain convinced that Boody should be free, and that Ryan's testimony will collapse like a pricked balloon."

"You had something up your sleeve, then?" I chided. "You hadn't told me all you knew."

The flicker of a smile hovered about Kenilworth's lips. "I believe I did omit to mention a detail or two, Doctor. Let me see." He laid a reflective forefinger along his nose. "Oh, yes; I hadn't told you that when Mrs. Creedon came for her last remittance she told me that Boody was rather peeved because she had given his everyday shoes to the ashman and replaced them with a new pair I had purchased for him. And, Doctor, it didn't take a microscope to find ashes on those bloody footprints in the hall. Nor did anyone have to tell me that Ryan had deliberately falsified. This Barnes is the real murderer and the Captain is sweating a confession out of him at this moment."

"I see the light now!" I cried. "Duncan, you and I might as well run up to headquarters and see the thing through."

"I would have suggested it," said Kenilworth quietly. "I couldn't sleep a wink this night if I tried. Wait till I wash up a little and we'll be off."

About two hours later a stupid taxi driver, who twice lost us in a torrential rainstorm that raged, finally deposited us, dripping, at police headquarters. Captain Leonard was not surprised to see us, apparently, but his demeanor was marked by a puzzling gravity.

"I wish you men had come sooner," he said solemnly. "Barnes told us how he set out the ashes for Mrs. Creedon, and how he rang the bell to receive payment for a task he had been performing for two years. As the aged woman opened her well-filled purse he leaped into the vestibule and struck her down with the iron raker he had forgotten to remove from his pocket. He tried to throw this into his ashcart, but it went over the top and landed on the platform of Grosvenor's car. Barnes wore the shoes his victim had given him, and he left the house by way of the gate after Mrs. Hamilton saw him at the kitchen window. He dropped into the side yard from that window, and the rain washed out his bloody trail to the gate. I gave Boody his liberty immediately, and as he said he wished to go home before he met anyone I asked him to tell Ryan to come in. He assured me he bore the officer no ill will because Ryan had made his aunt's words 'Black villain—Ashley!' instead of 'Black villain—ashman!' How was I to dream of anything like this? We just brought them both back here in a patrol wagon, and unless you wish to see them I'll send them both to the morgue as police routine demands. Boody killed Ryan and then turned his gun on himself. He left a note for you gentlemen in which he says he has squared accounts with the one who made him the human photograph of modern medical science."

"Then Ryan," I stammered, "must have been——"

"He was Wilbur Gage!" grated Duncan Kenilworth. "I knew him from the first!"

We have a short story by one of the greatest American writers in preparation for No. 26, out Dec. 1st.

THE CROOK

By HOWARD FLANAGAN

IN the early days of the Oil Country society was somewhat disorganized, and men from the field were constantly arriving in the mushroom towns, bent only on spending their money on riotous living. They had two or three months' work on each new well and received the bulk of the earnings on its completion. Pending the removal of tools to some other contract they came to the centers of population in pursuit of pleasure.

Each man might have anywhere from one hundred to five hundred dollars in his pocket, and when the amount was gone in luxury and dissipation he returned cheerfully to the hills and woods again to labor. Work, rest and a social game of poker was the sum of his daily life at the wells.

You would travel far to find a more rugged lot of men. Their sinews were developed by hard work and their constitutions hardened by exposure. Being so long accustomed to danger they had ceased to fear it. Separated from the knavery and other adjuncts of competitive civilization, being all of one class, instead of a sub-division of classes, like society in a denser and more varied population, their acts were governed by a common code. Bearing the same hardships, doing the same work, braving the same dangers, their ideas of life and honor were in association.

Their dress was not pretentious according to New York ideas of fashion, but it sometimes had regard to richness and style and was admirably suited to their surroundings. Their boots, which came nearly to their hips, cost a pot of money. Their great slouch hats were more expensive than they seemed. These, with a belt that held their trousers in place, and a double-breasted navy blue shirt completed their attire.

All kinds of men were among them, well born, educated and others less favored. Fortune was liable to strike any one in their calling, and the driller this year might be the opulent well owner next. This was the alluring promise that kept their eyes on the future, and made them laugh at the suggestion of care for the present.

Their ideas on gambling and other vices would hardly accord with the view of established standards, but for all of that they adapted those stern principles which come from an innate sense of justice and love of fair play. It was therefore one of their untaught rules of propriety to look kindly upon the man who is down.

A hanger-on around the gambling rooms was one of the characters of a certain mountain town. Sometimes he seemed a guileless, easy-going fellow, and at others he might be thought crafty and designing. He was known far and wide as "The Crook." Once one of the boys inquired in a bantering spirit what the name of The Crook was before he changed it, and he aptly replied:

"What's in a name without fame? Who would know me by hearing my name, and who does not know The Crook?"

The name came to him because of a peculiar infirmity. He had a perfectly natural right hand, which when held in front of him turned just like the handle of a cane from the wrist. This was due to some imperfection of the joints at the wrist and elbow, the result probably of an accident.

The Crook had a sallow complexion, thin, dark hair, and a straggling mustache. His figure, though gaunt, was massive in appearance, and his height was above six feet.

The peculiar thing about him was the abnormal strength of his crooked arm. It was like a vise when bent. Two men exerting their whole strength could not straighten it if he choosed to resist them. It was a trick of his, to amuse bystanders, to break a piece of rope an inch or more in diameter, by making it fast at one end to any stationary thing and winding the other around the crooked arm.

It was admirable the way he shuffled cards. It seemed as if his crooked hand was a clever, mechanical device, designed for that purpose. He did nothing except gamble, and was improvident with his winnings. When he had no money there was always some good-natured fellow in from the fields with funds, or lucky at the tables, to give him another stake. Being considered an honest, unfortunate man, somewhat incapacitated by nature for hard work, the hut of many a hard-fisted workingman was open to him when his luck was at its ebb.

He rarely lost at poker, but as he seldom won a great amount, his even luck was attributed to his patience and calm judgment. He always played poker with the boys from the field—just a social game, it was called—and he was considered one of them. At faro his luck was more irregular. It was in that game he sunk his money.

The Crook was particularly at home with a group of men who were working on a lease six miles from the railroad and about thirty miles from Aiken, the metropolitan town of that district, situated on the Bradford, Bordell & Kinzua, a little mountain road running out from Bradford.

When The Crook had fever they had him cared for and visited him. When he was penniless they filled his purse.

In all there were, perhaps, fifty men scattered about their section, which remained to be developed. Work was now being pushed and a dozen new derricks were up and drilling was in progress within them.

The men worked in shifts of twelve each, one force relieving the other at midnight. Two drillers and two tool dressers constituted the force at each well, at which the work never ceased until oil was struck or the hole was found dry.

The crew on the Cheeseman and Flanagan, No. 3, that being the way the wells were distinguished, had a little pine shanty near the scene of former labors, and about two miles through the unbroken forests from their present place of work.

In their modest cabin there was always a place and a welcome for a wayfarer. It was there The Crook used to go when he wanted a rest or a change of scene, as indeed he went to many other parts of the country with the same avowed purpose, and everywhere he received the proverbial hospitality of the driller's shanty. Accommodations could not be bought. They were free.

Another frequent guest was Tom Allen, who was known for miles around for his great strength. He had a tre-

mendous breadth of shoulders and a hand as hard as iron. He was one of the most peaceable of men and as well-mannered as one accustomed to the drawing-room. He had doubtless acquired much of his strength from swinging a sledge and handling the bits used in drilling, but any one who saw him stripped to the waist would know that the uniformity of the chest and back muscles was not gained in that way. His conversation was enough to convince any one that he had not been trained for a professional athlete; his associates gave him a deference that seemed his due, and in the many heated arguments that arose, they invariably appealed to him to decide the matter, and his opinion was accepted as final by both sides. He was hardly more than thirty-five years of age. Some averred that he was younger, for when he came to the oil fields, five years before, they said that he had the fair, smooth skin of a youth. He wore a full beard and outdoor life had bronzed him, but the upper part of his forehead, which his wide-brimmed hat had protected from the wind and sun, was strikingly white and clear. He had an intellectual forehead, too, and his dark hair waved back from it despite his apparent efforts to comb it down.

No one was considered a match for Tom in any of the wrestling bouts that served to while away the time outside the cabins, and anyway he didn't care to enter them. It was enough for the boys to know that he could take a two-hundred pound bit from the floor and throw it on the forge as one would heave a log of wood. They also remembered the winter day, two years before, when, after much urging, he went out into the snow to try for a fall with Barney Martin, the brawniest and biggest one of the four proprietors of the shanty. That time he got an underhold on Barney, and threw him over his head into a large snowdrift five feet behind.

Yet even in those days such exertions on Tom's part was sometimes followed by momentary illness, during which he would convulsively clutch his left side. His companions had noticed that when he, usually the calmest of men, became much excited, that left hand invariably went over his heart and his face turned pale.

Tom moved around the country a great deal, but he avoided the towns. He never showed any liking for The Crook, but he did many a friendly turn for him in his free-handed way, and only the week before he had been roughly handled in a dangerous brawl in the town of Knapp's Creek, in which he intervened to save The Crook, whom he considered a cripple, from being beaten or killed by a drunken crowd, who accused The Crook of cheating at cards.

Tom traveled considerably because his business demanded it. The boys agreed that drilling was not just the thing for him, as his attacks were getting more frequent. He had taken up a calling that was less laborious, though a thousand times more hazardous and not sanctioned by the laws of the State, though it was perfectly legitimate and honorable in the eyes of his fellows and rich well owners who employed him. He was a moonlighter.

When the oil sand was struck, at a depth of eight hundred to two thousand feet, according to the elevation of the ground, a torpedo of nitro-glycerine was dropped to the bottom of the well and exploded, making an excavation like a cellar at that point. Careless handling of the torpedo, careless filling of the shell, too much heat, a slight concussion or friction before it was dropped safely into the hole, meant an explosion that would make a huge excavation in the earth and literally scatter human beings into particles.

An incorporated company had the exclusive right of manufacturing and placing those torpedos. It was protected by patents, and special legislation, ostensibly for the protection of human life, made it a criminal offense for other than their employees to attempt the work. Its fee was several hundred dollars. The moonlighter could make the bomb and place it for twenty-five dollars and make money. The torpedo company had spies constantly on the move, and they were hated as cordially as the moonlighters were loved by the rugged men of the field and woods.

One wild night in winter Barney Martin and Ned Vinton, his partner, were seated before a blazing log fire in the shanty, and The Crook, who had arrived ahead of a fierce snowstorm in the afternoon, and had been royally welcomed, was fast asleep on the couch. Ned and Barney had come off tour in the afternoon and had slept until supper time, when, after cooking and eating their own meal, Barney had carried two hot pails to Dick Smith and George Fink, who were then on duty at the well. Barney had just returned, and having removed his outer clothing and lighted his pipe, was shrugging himself in the genial warmth of the fireplace.

"Flanagan was at the lease this afternoon," said he, "and he said that he had sent to the Richburg field for Tom. Number 3 will be in the sand before midnight, and Tom knows it. It's too bad he didn't catch the afternoon train from Bradford. He may have caught the later train to the junction, but this is the devil's own night for fifteen miles over the hills, and I hardly think he will come."

"I'll bet you a pair of boots he'll be here before she strikes the sand," said Vinton.

"I won't take you, because I think he will myself," answered Barney.

Just then there was a loud "Hallo, there!" in Tom's hearty voice, and a kicking of heavy boots knocking off the snow at the door.

Vinton and Barney both made a rush to open it and Tom, in a short coat, thrown wide open to the blasts, his breast protected only by his shirts, entered, looking rosy and grand.

Vigorous handshaking followed, and The Crook sat up and looked sleepily at the late arrival. He drawled a word of welcome and got no answer beyond a dangerous glance from Tom's eyes.

The three friends took seats before the fire, and The Crook falling back on the couch was again apparently in sound slumber in a few moments.

"How did you get here so soon?" asked Barney.

"Fortune delivered mine enemies into my hands and they helped me on my way," replied Tom, laughing.

"I rode from the junction with a couple of blockheads, up to watch the finish of No. 3. They were looking for this shanty and I left them at the Forks, and headed them for the labyrinth, near Five Mile Creek. If they get back before daylight they are in luck, and No. 3 will be flowing ten barrels an hour by that time.

The trio laughed heartily and The Crook sat up. Catching Tom's eye he again appeared fatigued and again settled himself for a nap.

"What time did The Crook get here?" asked Tom.

"About six o'clock," answered Vinton.

For a few moments Tom puffed his pipe and said nothing.

"The sneaks expected to meet him around here," said he, lowering his voice and speaking calmly.

"What for?" ejaculated Barney in surprise.

"I'd like to know," added Vinton, incredulously.

There was a movement on the couch, but the sleeper settled comfortable and was quiet once more.

"Let him explain to-morrow," said Tom, in a whisper, "but," and he glanced suspiciously at the lounge, "don't let him out of this house to-night."

"I think I have cleared the mystery of that work that headed us off around Duke and the lower field when we were kept running."

"Some things that have puzzled me begin to straighten themselves out," mused Vinton, breaking the silence that had lasted fully a minute.

"I hate to think it, Tom," said Barney. "We have been so square with that fellow, but I know that you wouldn't make a charge without proof. Come to think of it, The Crook has always been with us when we have had trouble."

"Well, keep still for to-night, and have your understandings afterwards. I must be off before daybreak."

"I have a secret to confide to you, boys," said Tom in a voice so low that the strained ear on the couch couldn't hear it. "Officers of my native State down South have been looking for me five years. One was in Richburg the day I left. He was at the Junction yesterday, when I arrived, as you know, one day late. He will be here to-morrow, expecting to meet his co-worker, The Crook, and myself. Let him meet The Crook, and you will learn all about him and about me. I have always dealt square with you and all the boys, haven't I, Barney and Ned?"

"Every time," said Barney in trembling tones.

"We have been partners, fair and square with one another," added Tom. "Think of that when you know the rest. I will be back soon to ask your friendship and protection."

Barney and Vinton were throwing glances of fire at the couch, and their chests were heaving with emotion. Both men arose and stood at either side of Tom's chair. They locked their arms around his neck and shoulders, and declared that he should never be taken while life was in their bodies.

"Cheer up, Tom, old man," said Barney a moment later with forced gaiety, "and let's have a little game. Got any money, Tom?"

"Oh, yes," said Tom, shaking off his sorrows. "Flush. Have a hundred."

"Good; I'll compromise with you for fifty per cent. of your pile, for I'm going off on a holiday pretty soon and I'll have to let you and Vinton contribute to my expenses."

"Sorry, old man," replied Vinton, "but I'll have to disappoint you, as I'm figuring on going to town myself. All you both have will be just about enough for me. You and Tom can stay here and keep house while I'm gone."

"All right, boys," responded Tom, cheerily; "let the best hands lose and the best bluffer win. You fellows got any money?"

"Sure, the boss was up to-day. Make the limit out of sight," said Vinton.

"Table stakes will do," said Barnery. "Deal, Tom."

Tom took the cards and began shuffling while Barney, being the banker, began counting out ten dollars' worth of chips for each man.

The Crook had been watching the proceedings in silence, his head resting on his hand. No one had deigned him a glance.

"Ain't I in this?" he finally asked, with his customary assurance. The others looked at Tom, and he nodded approval.

"Haul up a chair," growled Barney, but his unpleasant tone did not discomfit The Crook in the least, for he leisurely seated himself and looked entirely unconcerned.

The play went on without incident until it came to Barney's deal. He had been watching The Crook narrowly from beneath the shade of his hat, which was drawn well over his eyes. While doing so, he saw The Crook looking straight at the little window of the cabin, which was directly at Tom's back, and which was faced only by The Crook. Yawning, he put his deformed hand to his mouth, and twisted it until the elbow pointed directly at Tom, who was seated opposite him.

"I think I hear one of the boys," said Barney, stopping to listen, and making a suggestive nod to Tom. All listened, and the sharpened senses of the men told them, notwithstanding the shrieks of the wind, the creaking of the trees, and the beating of snow against the shanty, that some beings were outside.

"I guess it's nobody," said Barney carelessly. "I think it's getting cold in here," he added. "Ned, shake up the fire, and I'll put an old coat over that window. I feel the wind blowing through it," saying which he arose and peered out. "It's a fearful night," he said, as he tacked the coat in place.

Before he had time to deal the cards the door was flung open and a bluff, robust fellow stood on the threshold shaking a mantel of snow from his garments. Catching sight of Tom, he ran up and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"What news, Fink?" Barney inquired.

"Did you have two visitors here a few minutes ago?" Fink asked quickly.

"No," was the reply.

"From a distance I thought I saw two men talking through the window, and when I got here they were gone."

Fink's eyes ran around the table until they rested on The Crook, and noting his position towards the window, he scowled at him. The Crook was not disturbed in the least, and getting a signal from Barney, Fink let the matter drop.

"Much good it will do the sneaks," said Fink, all honor to his intelligence. "We can't do anything to-night. We dropped the bit two hours ago and we haven't found it. We must be ten feet from the sand."

Barney looked inquiringly at Fink and said not a word, but he was satisfied with the answer his silence gave.

"You take my hand, Fink," said Barney, rising; "I'll go on tour. No, you needn't come, Vint," he said, when his working partner got up. "We won't be more than an hour or two and I'll fix it with Smith."

"Come here a minute, Tom, I want to leave all my money with you, and you can keep bank and stake Fink when he gets busted."

Barney went to the couch and drew Tom there while he counted the silver and bills.

"Where's the shot?" he asked in an undertone, and shook his finger as a warning to him not to discuss the question. Receiving the information he got up and put on his overcoat.

"You better take a gun," said Fink.

"I think I will," said Barney. "It makes a fellow more comfortable a night like this. Besides, I thought I heard the cry of a stray panther this evening."

"So you did, for the boys on the lease heard it, too," said Fink. "I felt a little shaky coming up the road."

Barney, defiant as Ajax, stood in the open door for a second. The wind and snow beat furiously into the cabin, fanning the embers in the grate to a blaze and causing the lamp to flicker.

"Phew! what a night," said The Crook, shivering. "It makes me feel queer."

"You will feel worse to-morrow," said Barney, as he

threw his gun over his shoulder and passed out into the night.

The play had proceeded for several deals, and a jackpot, with nearly sixty dollars in it, was still unopened. The Crook had started in with less than ten dollars and had been winning steadily. The pot was good for more than a hundred to the winner, and it was The Crook's deal. Vinton opened it for ten dollars and Fink made it twenty dollars to draw cards. Tom Allen dropped out and The Crook and Vinton called. Vinton drew two cards, Fink took one and The Crook three. Vinton made a stiff bet, which Fink called, and The Crook raised. Vinton raised again and Fink dropped out. The Crook came back at Vinton and Vinton calling, The Crook laid down three aces and a pair of fours. Vinton had three kings.

The Crook reached for the pot leisurely, and Tom Allen's heavy hand was laid forcibly on his arms.

"You have run the length of your rope all around," said Tom, with forced calmness. "Take your hand off that pot." The Crook kept the money covered and tried to push Tom's hand away.

"Vinton," said Tom, "the money is yours. I saw this deformed wretch lift those three aces from the bottom of the deck. The whole deal was put up," saying which, Tom, now in the fever heat of passion, seized The Crook's arm and wrenched it violently and pushed him from the table.

Desperate at the thought that every hand in the country would be raised against him to-morrow, and that he would have to go forth penniless, to be kicked and jibed and starved until he got to where he was not known, and aroused now for the first time from his demoniacal coolness to anger by the pain imparted by Tom's iron grasp, the wells of passion and venom so long hidden came to the surface. His brain, deformed as his cursed hand, was crowded with thoughts of vengeance upon the man whom he had already doubly betrayed.

"You're a liar and a thief yourself!" he shouted. "I won square, and I'll have my money!" whereupon he grabbed for the banker's box on the chair beside Tom's—a fool's attempt in the presence of three such men.

Vinton and Fink reached for him, but Tom commanded them to leave The Crook to him.

"No name is abhorrent enough to describe you—a traitor to those who kept you out of the gutter and fed you—a persecutor and robber of those whose house was always open to you! I don't know a thing that crawls that is so vile as you," and here Tom put that vise-like grip on his neck and shook him until his eyes bulged.

No one was prepared for what followed when Tom let go. The Crook sprang at him like a wildcat. Reaching across the little table he caught Tom's neck in that deadly crook and was doing his utmost to break it with a twist.

In vain Fink and Vinton struggled to loosen that villainous hold. They wrenched The Crook's body, they caught him by the neck and threatened him with death if he didn't let go, but his clutch remained firm and his face spoke defiance.

All this was quickly done. Tom's head was bent forward over the table in such a position that his body was the same as pinioned. Any attempt to move his chest back from the table so that his arms might be reached only served to increase the tension. No telling what Fink and Vinton, maddened beyond reason, might have done in another moment, but their help was not needed.

Tom's giant strength showed itself. His neck and shoulders acting in unison, had so far resisted the mad efforts of the serpent-like arm to do him harm. The muscles of his neck stood out like whipcords.

Now he gathered himself in a concerted effort. The whole strength of his back came into play, as he drew slowly back from the table, his neck still in the arm that was straining the other way. His chest being free, his arms were at his service. At the risk of dislocating his neck, he swung his body to the right. His right arm followed the motion. Back it went as a sledge swings in a blacksmith's hand, and as a sledge falls from over the shoulder and over the head, that terrible right hand, more to be feared when clenched as tightly as it was now than a horse's hoof, struck The Crook in the left temple, and the sound of the blow reverberated through the cabin.

The Crook's hand involuntary sought his head, and the next instant he fell as stiffly as a log of wood and just as hard. His head struck on the brick hearth, and he laid there motionless.

The attention of Vinton and Fink was directed to Tom. An expression of intense suffering was on his face. He grasped the chair for support with one hand, the other clutched his side.

They had seen Tom this way before, but never before was that ashy color in his face. Never before had his lips and ears been so white. There was a look in his eyes that frightened them, as they rushed to his side and put their arms about him. Then his eyes closed and his head dropped forward on his chest. Tenderly they bore him to the couch, rubbed his hands and called gently, but despairingly, to him to make another effort to recover himself. Vinton opened his shirt front to give him air, and he bared the massive chest half-way to the waist. Tom had ceased to breathe, and his heart was stilled forever.

Fink and Vinton stood with their heads bowed in mute agony, and gave not a look nor a thought to the hearth where The Crook was lying as he had fallen. They were aroused by a report that sounded like the boom of a hundred cannon, and the earth trembled beneath them, and the shanty swayed as if it would fall.

"My God!" exclaimed Fink, "the shot has gone up with Barney," and seizing his coat he dashed excitedly from the house, leaving Vinton alone in a wild state of mind, not knowing whether to follow him or to remain with the dead. He went to the hearth and raised the body of The Crook. The eyes looked at him with a frightful stare. He was beyond the just scorn and vengeance of men.

Smith, Fink and Barney, not dead, returned within a half-hour. Barney and Smith were both suffering from shock. Barney walked directly to Tom's couch and lovingly stroked the dead man's face.

Turning to Vinton after a while he said: "The spies were blown to atoms near the lease. Their wagons upset while Smith and I were chasing them, and a can of glycerine, stolen from our tool-house, which they thought was for Tom's use, exploded.

"I shot the well for Tom."

In the early morning an officer from Tennessee arrived at the shanty for Tom, prepared to meet violent opposition. Four men broken in spirit and bowed in grief received him quietly, and leading him to the couch turned back the covering from the dead man's face. He heard the story of the night, looked at Tom sorrowfully, and at The Crook, who was lying neglected on the woodpile in the corner, indifferently.

"The Crook hadn't a human instinct," said he, "but Darrell," that is what he called him, "was all heart. Poker made him a defaulter, and his conscience ruined his health. Poker wrecked his life and now it has ended it. Poor Darrell!"

IN THE TEMPLE OF DELIGHT

By JESSIE JULIET KNOX

SING LEE was a Chinese highbinder of middle age, vicious and unattractive; at least from a feminine point of view. Such characteristics, however, did not prevent him from having for his promised wife a Celestial maiden, young and beautiful.

It was a far cry from the San Francisco Chinatown, with its gaud and glitter, to the ice fields and salmon fisheries of Alaska, and as long as the highbinder remained in that place, remote and mysterious, life would still hold some brightness for his young fiancé.

There was much money to be made in Alaska, and all the long days, as Sing Lee dragged in the nets and deposited their glittering burden of salmon in baskets, he was thinking: "Plitty soon I catch 'em heap plenty money. Bimeby I go San Flancisco mally he wifoo."

To one with aspirations this life at Karluk would not have been especially inspiring; just drawing in the nets in the cold and wet, just the gray sea always, with its heavy salt smell, and at night the hard bunk in the crowded Chinese tenements, with perhaps a whiff of opium. Ah, but the poppy goddess brought dreams, and made one forget the salmon—sometimes.

Sing Lee was not a person of sentiment, though, and his thoughts were, for the most part, centered on the getting of gold. When he had enough he would go back to San Francisco, the place where Chinese slaves were bought and sold. He would take the young girl, Ah Leen, upon whose ivory-tinted charms he had already deposited a thousand dollars in advance. He would buy many more slaves, too, and she—the peerless one—should guard them for him until he could dispose of them to others of his caliber.

His face was not pleasant to look upon when he indulged in such reflections.

One day, when he had brought in an unusually big catch of king salmon, he received a letter from a woman in San Francisco—a Chinese woman—and it contained a message which changed his plans for a time. He told no one what the message was, but the next day he disappeared.

Several months before this had come the Chinese New Year, although it meant little to the Chinese who worked in the salmon fisheries of Alaska. At this time the streets of the San Francisco Chinatown were filled with heathen pomp and splendor, and the restaurants and temples were ablaze with lights.

A shower of almond blossoms, a high-pitched, girlish laugh, and the world began anew for the handsome young Sun Loy.

It was a festive time, and the young man's heart throbbed with joy as he peered upward, trying to discover the source of the shower of almond petals. Was it a woman who had dared?

In that one fleeting glance upward he had discovered a blossom-like face, and his whole soul had gone out to its owner, as she leaned far out over a mass of Chinese lilies and almond blossoms. There came over him a thrill which went straight to the heart of the fair one—the one who had dared.

With all the coquetry of her sex she smiled upon him in a sweet, shy way, and a way not to be resisted by one of Sun Loy's temperament. Who could wonder that in the intoxication of that glance he forgot that he had a wife—a wife who was older than he, and very unprepossessing in every way, vastly different from this dimpled and seductive young creature.

Ah Leen had been burning her incense before the joss, and had bowed her jewel-decked head many times upon the rug, and waved her incense sticks dutifully. While worshiping thus, it had seemed to her virgin soul a most delectable thing to be good.

After her devotions she had stepped out upon the long balcony overlooking the street, in order to engage in the unwonted delight of gazing at the crowd below—sinuous and ever-changing.

The streets were lined with blossoms, and all the world seemed like a summer land. Her thoughts drifted sadly to far-away Alaska, where worked the one whose life fate had linked with hers. Oh, bitter fate! Why should her lot be such a cruel one?

The lanterns of the joss swayed and glittered on all the balconies, while in front of every doorway were the ubiquitous little bowls of punks and red papers, to frighten away evil spirits. Far up in latticed windows could be seen the pale, sad faces of slaves, and up and down the streets toddled beautiful little girls, who, a little later on, would be sold as slaves.

As the handsome young Sun Loy looked upward again the more was he convinced that it was absolutely imperative that he should at once ascend the stairway and worship the five idols in the Temple of Delight. With a boldness quite remarkable for a young man who had hitherto cared nothing for worship, he mounted the stairway.

When he had suddenly disappeared from the crowded streets, she, with happy prescience, said to her maid: "Ah Mooie, look. Do you think he will come? Is my hair beautiful as the lacquer? My lips—are they red as the rose? Will the good joss be angry?"

"No—no," replied the maid, "he will not be angry. You are indeed more beautiful than the almond flower, most honorable one. Your eyes are stars. Your mouth a rose. Your heart speaks. Listen!"

Listening, she heard, looking, she saw, with the eyes of her soul, and then—he came; but with his coming, life was changed.

First, as the faithful maid reported through the crevices of the grill work, the noble one burned his incense and "mock-money" before the gods, and then placed upon the altar an offering of money, wrapped in red paper.

His devotions ended, what more natural than that he, too, being young and curious, should go out upon the balcony to look down upon the crowd? What more natural than that the maiden, Ah Leen, should drop her fan at that precise moment? Sun Loy, being gallant as well as handsome, returned the fan with a slight pressure of the satiny hand which received it.

This man was not like any one she had ever seen. He was a demi-god, strong and handsome and young; not in the least like the vicious old Sing Lee, the wealthy and

hated fisherman highbinder to whom her father had promised her.

Ah Leen's maid might have been deaf, dumb and blind, for aught one could notice to the contrary, for she appeared to see and hear nothing.

For a time Ah Leen forgot that she was sold to old Sing Lee—Alaska was so far away, perhaps, he, too, would forget; perhaps he might even die.

She meant no harm. She was so young and so human, after all, and had a tender, innocent heart; but to-night she knew, as she looked into the eyes of this transcendant being, that she was no longer a child, and womanhood, with all its mystic meaning, enveloped her like a roseate cloud.

After hearing her story the young Sun Loy registered a vow that she should never become the wife of the highbinder. It would be desecration.

And meanwhile, they must meet again; but where, how, when? The deaf and dumb Ah Suey spoke at this moment, and suggested the theater.

The two girls did not see the face of an evil-looking Chinese woman peering at them from an adjoining balcony, nor would they have known, if they had seen, that this woman was the wife of the young Sun Loy.

Ah Leen slept that night with her lips on the dainty sandalwood fan he had touched.

Until the spring came these two young creatures were happy in love's sweet way, meeting in a room belonging to the theater.

The time came at last when the young Sun Loy determined to claim her for his own. He had no time to lose now, as the boats would soon be coming from Alaska, and who could tell when old Sing Lee might come to claim his victim?

On this night Ah Leen had for some reason arrayed herself more gorgeously than ever before. The black hair sparkled with jewels, while lips and cheeks were tinted, and eyebrows penciled.

Pushing their way through the mass of Celestials who were literally packed in the theater the two girls ascended with hundreds of other women to the balcony near the roof. Here they could look down on the stage, where tom-toms were clanging noisily, and the shrill notes of the Chinese flute rose high, in unison with the shrill falsettos of the men, who were impersonating women. The air was thick with smoke of cigarettes, and heavy with the odor of tuberoses, which the women wore in their hair.

At last, after a glimpse of the stage, they repaired to the trysting-place, and before parting agreed that Ah Leen should go with Sun Loy the next night, and together they would sail for China, leaving the hated wife in San Francisco and the highbinder in Alaska.

When Sun Loy stepped out into the cool night air he felt something pushed forcibly into his hand. A horrible fear stole upon him and he glanced tremblingly in every direction, but could see no one who could have done this.

The happy crowd still laughed along the streets, the almond blossoms still filled the air with their fragrance, and yet this man had just received his death warrant, for on the slip of paper held in his trembling hand he read: "You shall die like a dog; the reason—Ah Leen!"

"To die," he groaned, "when she loves me. No, no—I must see her at once. Perhaps we can escape. We must escape!"

Ah Leen had evidently gone home another way, for he could not overtake her.

"I will see her to-morrow night," he whispered.

Ah Leen was first at the rendezvous, which to-night they had decided should be once more at the Temple of Delight, where they had first met. Soon the waiting maid exclaimed: "He comes! he comes! He is fairer than the sun. See, he kneels before the joss; he burns the incense; he——"

Just then sudden darkness fell upon the place. They could not understand. They were afraid, and trembled in the darkness.

It lasted only a moment, and the tapers were relighted, and before the timid Ah Leen could realize what had happened she felt her tender body seized in the rough grasp of some one, and his hot breath was on her face.

With a scream of horror she looked, and saw her hated owner, his heart cold as the ice fields of Alaska. When she gazed into his cruel face all hope died within her.

Forcing her upon her feet while the other girl was made prisoner by one of his accomplices, he placed her before the altar, hissing: "You are mine now—mine, I tell you! You go no more to meet Sun Loy."

Just then she heard from some niche of the place the laugh of a Chinese woman, scornful, triumphant.

And then—and then she beheld the noble and peerless one—Sun Loy—lying dead in the Temple of Delight.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

THE RAINIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD

THE reputation of being the rainiest place in the world has long been enjoyed by the hill station Cherraupunji, on the slope of the Himalaya, in Assam, with a mean rainfall that has been variously stated, according to the length of the record and the particular rain-gage in question. The latest official value, based on a forty-year record at the Cherrapunji police station, is 426 inches per annum. Blanford, the well-known authority on Indian meteorology, thought that the mean in some places at Cherrapunji exceeded 500 inches, but nowhere amounted to 600 inches. So far as actual records go the rainfall at the Indian station is surpassed by that recently reported by D. H. Campbell, of Stanford University, as having been measured at Waialeale, in the island of Kauai, Hawaii, though the record covers only five years and the mean might be reduced by a longer period of observation. During the years 1912-1916 inclusive, the Hawaiian station, which is 5,075 feet above sea-level, recorded the astonishing mean annual rainfall of 518 inches, or more than forty-three feet! Mr. Campbell says that Waialeale is seldom free from rain clouds and the precipitation is almost incessant; hence the whole surrounding region is a bog, bearing low trees thickly draped with dripping masses of moss and liverworts.

HELLENE OF MYCENAE

By W. H. COMSTOCK

"AT last, Scott, we're on Homeric ground. I suppose Clytemnestra superintended the family washing for the lordly house of Agamemnon down yonder at that brook."

Thus spoke one of the two sun-browned young men who were seated beneath an olive tree on the hillside just north of the site of ancient Mycenæ in the Pelopponesus. They were American students, who had finished their studies and were now making a pedestrian tour through Greece, and had arrived on a hot September afternoon at this famous place.

Their elevated position gave them an extended view of the beautiful Argolic Gulf, with a tall man-of-war riding at anchor in the offing, from the mast of which the American flag floated, brilliant in the slanting sunshine. At the foot of the hill on which they were seated, across the little fields and orchards where the peasants were busy with the harvest, they saw a group of women at the brook in the valley below.

The young man who had spoken put his field-glass to his eyes.

"By Jove, Scott!" he exclaimed, "I tell you these Greek women are the handsomest in the world! Well might one of their great-great-grandmothers have kept two nations in commotion for ten years! Do you see that tallest girl in the group? Look at her, I say—a form like a goddess! An ideal Helen of Troy!"

Scott slowly took his pipe from his mouth.

"Come now, Lyle, you're raving again," he replied. "Your new-discovered Helen is doubtless a goat-herd from that miserable village down there, with a breath rank of garlic, and a soul as ignorant of sentiment as her garments are of soap."

"Well, Scott," replied Lyle, with severity, "I thank the Lord for one thing at least, and that is that my soul isn't yet quite dried up within me, till it has lost all power to see the beautiful, as yours has. Come, let's go down to the village and get something to eat."

There is a good hotel in the village of Kharvati, where visitors to the neighboring ruins are entertained. Here the Americans made a hearty supper on rye bread, mutton and tea.

The harvest moon rose early and flooded the country with her beams. The two students sat a long time before the open window of their room, which overlooked the whole village. They had smoked in silence for an hour, when suddenly Lyle pointed down the road, and exclaimed in an excited whisper to the dozing Scott:

"There she is again, as I live! Now look at her and take back your vile insinuation about garlic and soap."

A young man and woman were strolling slowly up the street. He was a swarthy, dark-eyed fellow, in the uniform of a Greek soldier. The young girl at his side chanced to raise her face to the searching moonlight, and both the students were struck with her remarkable beauty. Her head was uncovered, and her luxuriant hair was combed low over her brow, and fastened in a simple coil at the back of her shapely head. Her face was purely classic in outline—such a face as the old sculptors loved to cut in marble—full of intellect and of passion.

The couple walked leisurely up the street, evidently talking in the melodious Greek, those light nothings that youth and moonlight inspire in all languages. They paused before the door of the inn, and the two strangers were familiar enough with their speech to understand their parting "Good-night, Stephano," and "Farewell, Hellene."

"There, Scott, what do you think of her, now? See what a superb creature you would fain have maligned!" exclaimed Lyle.

"Well, I must say," replied Scott, "either the moonlight played us a trick, or she is a rather pretty girl."

Next morning the two students commenced their explorations among the famous ruins. The region is replete with interest for the student, and as their daily intercourse with the people afforded opportunity for the study of the modern Greek—one of the chief objects of their tour—they decided to spend some time in the place. They did not see Hellene again for several days. But Lyle did not scruple to find out what he could about her from the peasants.

He learned that she was the grand-daughter of the rich old landlord with whom they lodged. Her parents were dead, and her education had been intrusted to an old tutor, famous for his learning, who had died the year before. And soon, they said, she was to marry Stephano, the young soldier, the son of a wealthy neighbor.

One afternoon the two students were resting in the shadow of the massive walls, which form the entrance to those celebrated ruins called the "Tomb of Agamemnon." They were discussing a fragment of pottery which they had just discovered, when Lyle, looking up, saw Hellene coming slowly toward them, picking here and there the late flowers and grasses, evidently quite unconscious of their presence. The ground over which she was advancing was strewn with blocks of breccia from the ancient walls, which made her progress often difficult, and the two friends watched with admiration, the ease and grace of her movements, which brought out the fine lines of her figure.

At length she raised her head and saw the two men with surprise and embarrassment, for she seemed on the point of flight.

Lyle stepped forward, hat in hand.

"Pardon us," he said, "for startling you. We should have made our presence known sooner. But we have found a curious piece of pottery here, and were trying to determine its origin. Will you look at it?" and he held out the fragment in his hands.

Her first fright had vanished, but the girl stood regarding them with a look of indecision, which threatened to end the interview on the slightest occasion. But gradually a more confident expression took its place, and she asked: "Do you know Homer?"

"No," replied Lyle, "I can't say we know him very well, but we read him and have learned to love him. You Greeks have a great advantage over the rest of the world in reading Homer in your own tongue."

"Indeed we do," replied the young girl, her embarrassment rapidly disappearing, "but few of our countrymen appreciate it. Yet some do, for all Greeks are not like those that go to America to get rich. There are still many who love the glorious language and traditions of our people. Oh, yes," she continued, daintily taking the fragment from Lyle's outstretched hands, "there are many such persons here; I have a collection of them myself."

A beginning thus made, they passed easily to other topics of common interest. The students found that this young girl was thoroughly trained in the literature of her country, as well as its history, and loved both fervently.

An hour passed in eager converse. At the earnest request of the two students, Hellene finally consented to recite for them some of her favorite passages from the Iliad. She seated herself on a rock which had fallen from the gigantic ruin behind her, and with the westering sun shining full on her beautiful face, glowing with the immortal words she spoke, she formed a picture against the background of those massive walls, which would have won the admiration of a far less appreciative audience than the two listeners. When she had finished, the three walked back to the village together.

For a few days thereafter the Americans saw much of Hellene. They examined the fine collection of antiques which she herself had made, and found her of invaluable assistance in several lines of study in which they were engaged.

But no woman could long fail to see in Lyle's every glance and tone, that wondrous something which women long and fear to look upon. A shyness and diffidence quite contrary to her former frank and easy manner, gradually interposed a barrier to their intercourse, till at last the students rarely saw her. Scott grumbled and blamed Lyle for it all.

"It's only another case of your confounded enthusiasm spoiling things. Here I was nearly through with my to-be-celebrated thesis on 'Ancient and Modern Greek,' and you knew the girl was my main dependence for the work, and yet, like a fool, you must go and fall in love with her, and put her to flight. Why can't you study anything from a purely scientific standpoint?"

But Lyle's dejection at Hellene's avoidance of him at last became so utter that even Scott was moved to pity. The disconsolate lover tried all in vain to have a word with the girl. She deftly thwarted his clumsy masculine plans until he became well nigh desperate.

One evening when this condition of things had gone on for several weeks, the two men were smoking in the little front room of the inn. The village had been quiet for some time when they heard a light footstep and caught a glimpse of Hellene as she slipped quickly out from a side door into the moonlit street. Lyle rose with a look of grim determination on his face and followed her. In a moment he was at her side. "Hellene," he said, "can't I walk with you—I have wanted to speak with you about something for a long time."

She made him no answer, and they walked on in silence together.

The road led past the last scattering houses of the village, along the bank of the stream. It was bordered by gnarled old olive trees through whose branches a mosaic of light and shade filtered from the moon to the ground. A sleepy gurgle came now and then from the stream near by.

Lyle stopped, took Hellene's hand in his own, and said: "Hellene, you must know what I want to tell you. You know that I love you better than life. Don't you see you've been killing me by inches of late? Why do you shun and avoid me so?"

The girl's eyes were downcast for a moment, and he saw her bosom heave in quick sobs. Then she raised her face to his, and there were tears of a great joy in her glorious eyes. The lovers did not see the crouching figure of the man, which glided away from the wall near by off into the placid night.

The next day Scott was hard at work all day on his notes. In the early afternoon Lyle went alone to visit a distant part of the ruins, where he was to obtain certain measurements which had been forgotten. Hellene saw him pass from the inn, and an expression of suppressed anxiety displaced the radiance in her eyes.

Lyle proceeded to a lonely spot some two miles from the village, and was bending over to examine a broken fragment of rock, when he was suddenly seized from behind by a powerful hand, and hurled backward on the ground with such force as to render him for a moment unconscious. When he opened his eyes his feet were tied, and his hands securely pinioned behind his back. Stephano was seated on a rock near by. The two men looked at each other for a moment in silence. Stephano was calmly rolling a cigarette in his tawny fingers, and a mocking smile played about his mouth. Lyle could not long control his wrath.

"You sneaking coward!" he cried. "Is this the way a soldier fights?"

Stephano regarded him a moment, then replied, and his voice was low and melodious:

"You Americans have a saying, I believe, that 'all is fair in love and war.' You came and stole the heart of my Hellene, the fairest girl in Greece. Did you think you could carry her off so easily? All Greece, you know, once fought ten years for one woman. You should have been wiser. Now I'm going to cut the artery in your arm with my dagger point here, and then I shall sit still and see you slowly bleed to death!"

Lyle's anger burned within him as he realized his own helplessness.

"What, you infernal villain, do you mean to murder me without a chance to strike a blow? If you have a grain of manhood in you, set me free and I will fight you in any way you choose."

"Control yourself, stranger," answered Stephano, with maddening deliberation. "There is no need of such excitement. You have brought this on yourself—you risked it and lost. Now take the consequences like a man."

With careful precision Stephano felt for the artery in the bared arm of his victim. A quick stroke, and Lyle felt the warm blood trickling down over his tied hands. Stephano seated himself opposite and spoke as follows:

"Yes, and this an artistic way of dealing with an enemy—not the bungling job of a common assassin. This is the very luxury and refinement of revenge. Ah! My fine Paris, think of the Helen you are losing! Think of those eyes! How they look at one. Think of the kisses of those lips—nectar for the gods!"

At first Lyle's soul was filled with a mighty surge of passion, together with a desperate resolve not to gratify the villain by any sign of fear or suffering. As his strength failed, he gradually became calmer. He heard distinctly the long-drawn shrill of a locust in the grass near by. He imagined curious shapes in the clouds that floated high up in the blue vault. His truant thoughts recalled a yellow-covered novel, which he had borrowed when a boy and hidden till he had read it through. He even smiled as he thought of the swaggering hero, bound and tortured by the Indians, yet making his escape by miraculous feats of strength and daring. He almost

laughed aloud as he made a whimsical comparison of the story with his own condition.

But his strength was going fast. Great blurs of darkness came and went before his eyes. He had almost lost consciousness, when he seemed to see Hellene suddenly appear, with Scott dimly visible in the background. The girl paused a moment, then with a bound like a tigress she sprang upon Stephano, bore him to the ground, and something in her hand flashed in the sunlight. Then Lyle's hand was raised, a handkerchief bound around his arm.

Several hours later Lyle was roused from his torpor by the fresh sea breeze, and the motion of the little steam launch which was rapidly making its way out from the harbor to the great man-of-war in the bay. He found himself bolstered up on the cushions, beneath the stern awnings of the little craft, with Hellene seated at his side. The light of a deathless love shone in her lustrous eyes. Scott stood by the hatchway, looking back toward the fast retreating shores of Greece. Lyle caught the words he was muttering to himself:

"Yes—had to do it. Girl wouldn't be left behind—lucky thing I knew the captain—big row if they'd found him before we got off. All on account of the fool's confounded enthusiasm—never can investigate anything like a genuine scholar—always puts his foot in it somehow."

Several rousing stories will appear in the next number of this magazine, written by well-known authors.

STRANGE CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS

MOST of the homes in America are ruled by the chubby fist of King Baby, but in countries where Superstition rules, the chubby fist can only beat impotently against the cell of torture into which Superstition has thrust him. The innocent babies are supposed to have as many evil spirits as the grown-ups. In Angola there were counted 50 cuts, made in order to let out the evil spirits, on a baby only five months old! One wonders if the evil spirits needed so many exits.

Unless the witch-doctor varies his "cures" he loses prestige, says Jean Price in *World Outlook*. So he may assure the anxious mother that the evil spirits can escape as well through burns as through cuts. Blindly following the only medical advice they know, the parents themselves will sometimes heat an iron red-hot and touch their tiny baby over the head, neck and even the abdomen, leaving only a small space between the burns. Then wrapping the little form in a clean or, as often, dirty cloth, they leave it to recover or die.

If a Chinese baby dies, the evil spirit when released will enter the body of the next child born. In order to prevent this calamity the parents "tie an egg and some mustard seed to the body of the dead child in the belief that the evil spirit will not appear until the egg hatches and the seed sprouts. The astute parents carefully boil the egg and the seed in order to postpone the date indefinitely."

Superstition seems to us only another name for lack of the commonest of common sense. Take, for instance, the African parents who found their child's skull partly torn away and its brain laid bare by the attack of a hyena. Did they rush the child to even a witch-doctor? No. They ran after the hyena, for as long as the animal lived their child could not recover! In this case the parents couldn't find the hyena, so they brought the child after several hours to the medical missionary. Fortunately, he was able to patch up the brains and is now developing them in one of our mission schools.

There is one safeguard for babies the world over, mother-love, the Esperanto of human emotions. But even that power is not proof against the force of superstition. Women who are now Christians admit that they have used a heavy grub-hoe to tear and cut to mincemeat the faces of baby girls, thereby turning aside the wrath of devils who curse their family with too many girl babies. Some of these women have cast out even boy babies to be eaten by the village dogs, with the idea that sick boys are demons in disguise, bringing care, worry and debt.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.

1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
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CURING THE RHEUMATISM

BY ERNEST JARROLD.

IT was such a beautiful spring afternoon; there was such warmth of comfort in the glad sunshine; such jocund melody from the throats of birds, and such fragrance of flowers in the air that Mrs. Finn turned to her husband and said:

"Mike, dear, I think 'twould do you good to go out on the stoop a little while and sit in the sun. Faith, 'twould stir your blood and make you forget the rheumatiz while you're lookin' at the grane grass growin' and the butterflies makin' butter, and the honey bees atin' honey, and——"

"What talk have you, woman?" growled Mr. Finn. "And while I'm at it, I suppose I can watch the bumble-bees bummin'. Bad scran to you!" The sufferer looked with a grimace of pain at his right leg, which lay stretched on a chair before him swathed in red flannel.

"Usha, Biddy," he resumed, "me heart is bruk wid the waitin' and the pain! Didn't I rub me leg with wood ashes and vinegar till there's ne'er an inch of skin left on it? Haven't I an eel-skin around me ankle now like a bracelet on a lady's arrum? And what good did it do me, avic, to soak it in mustard and b'ilin' water?"

"Hush, hush, Mike!" said Mrs. Finn soothingly. "Don't you feel better after takin' the doctor's medicine?"

"Faith, thin, I do not," groaned the sufferer. "Shure, he gev me stuff for me liver and what he calls the uric acid in me blood, whin the pain is in the bone in me leg! Give me a sup o' the craytur, Biddy, there's a darlint; 'tis the only thing that aises me intirely."

Mrs. Finn poured out a liberal dose of aromatic liquor, mixed with a little water from the kettle, just enough, as she smilingly said, to "take the cruelty out of the water," and handed the fragrant decoction to her husband.

As the stimulating mixture rippled soothingly over his palate Mike uttered a sigh of relief. Mrs. Finn took advantage of his temporary satisfaction to urge upon him the advantage of a sun bath, and five minutes later he was lying in a rocking-chair upon the back stoop. Tobacco soothed him, a blue-bird sang a solo for him, a butterfly with black velvet wings fluttered across his listless vision, while a crow cawed a good-afternoon to him from the azure vault above. Under the influence of rejuvenating nature, Mr. Finn forgot for a time his rheumatism. He smoked and dreamed hopefully of the time when he could stand erect among men once more. But he was rudely awakened by a sinister, buzzing sound about his head. He started, grabbed his hat, and struck frantically at a hornet with wings which flashed like a Toledo blade in the sunlight. The sudden movement caused his leg to fall from the chair, and he roared with rage and pain.

"Arrah, Biddy dear," he moaned, as his frightened wife appeared in the doorway, "pick up me leg, darlint, I'm dishlocated intirely."

Scarcely had he resumed his position and a comparative degree of comfort, when his twelve-year-old son came around the corner of the house with a bundle of books under his arm.

"So that's you, is it, Mickey?" exclaimed Mr. Finn, glad of any diversion, "tell me this, are they t'achin' you anything new in school these days?"

"Yes, father," replied the boy, cheerfully, "I'm in the natural history class, and I'm learnin' all about animals and insects."

Mr. Finn became interested immediately. He raised himself on his elbow and exclaimed:

"Begorra, I'm glad to hear that. Maybe you can tell me what mosquitoes were made for?"

"Faith, I can, father," replied the boy, proudly. "Mosquitoes are vaccinators."

"What nonsince are you talking, boy?" said Mr. Finn.

"'Tis true, father," went on the boy, earnestly, "the min as know all about science and hepterology say the secret has been found out. For ages and ages min have been wondering what snakes and mosquitoes were made for, and now they have found out that mosquitoes are useful little birds. They carry around with them little bottles of malaria poison. Whin they sting you they squirt into you a little of the poison, so that whin you catch the dis'ase you won't catch it at all, at all, all the same like the smallpox."

Mr. Finn laughed long and loud at this explanation. Then he resumed:

"Well, we'll l'ave it go at that. But mebbe you can tell me of what use is a hornet? There's wan of their nests up there," pointing to a globular object which hung from the roof of the shanty overhead. "Does your book tell annything about thim?" he resumed.

"Faix it do, father," replied the boy, proudly conscious of his superior knowledge, as he leafed through a volume of elementary natural history. "A hornet is an hymenopterous insect——"

"A high what?" interrupted Mr. Finn.

"An hymenopterous insect of the genus *Vespa*. The Eyetalians call them *Vespa Crabo*. They are very pugnacious. That means they are like the Irish, father. Their abdomen is joined to their thorax by a thread-like pedicle, and the upper wings are placated. They ate insects and suck the juice of apples and flowers. Their wings are parallel-veined at the proximal part, and loosely reticulated at the distillication."

"What terrible bastes they must be if all that is true," said Mr. Finn, in an awed tone. "But what good are they, Mickey? Tell me that?"

"Well," replied the boy, "they have been making experiments in Europe wid the little divvils and a man by the name of Pasture, the same man that invented hydrophobia, a Frinchman, says that the sting of a *Vespa* will cure the rheumatiz. He says that if wan of thim little birds wid the hot tails should sting you, you would forget all about the rheumatiz, and you would swear you never had it."

This more or less accurate scientific information made a profound impression upon Mr. Finn. He became intensely interested.

"Mickey alanna," he said, "it's fine to have an eddication like you. I wonder could I try that cure on me leg?"

"It's very painful, father," said the boy, who was be-

ginning to be afraid of the effect created by his imagination upon his father. "Besides, how could you catch one of the little divvils?"

By this time the idea of applying a hornet to his diseased limb had become fixed in Mr. Finn's mind. He was not to be turned aside by such trifles as catching a hornet. From the nest overhead a stream of hornets was constantly going and returning. He knew by experience how irritable they were, and he quickly resolved on a course of action. Mickey, meanwhile, was trembling with apprehension. He did not dare to tell his father that he had only been playing upon his credulity, so he made up his mind to accept the consequences, trusting to good luck to pull him through. Mr. Finn looked up at the hornets' nest in a speculative manner for a few minutes. Then he called his wife.

"Biddy," he said, when she appeared in the doorway, "take off thim red flannins from me leg and I'ave it naked as me hand."

"But, Mike, dear, you'll catch cold," said Mrs. Finn.

"Niver mind, woman, do as I tell you," said Mr. Finn, in a tone which brooked no opposition.

When the leg was exposed Mr. Finn issued order No. 2.

"Go you into the house and shut the door behind you, Biddy. You may look out of the windy if you like, but don't open the door for your life till I tell you to."

Mrs. Finn obeyed, taking her station at the closed window in mingled anxiety and alarm.

"Now, Mickey," said the robust patient, "you go around the corner of the shanty and throw a stone or two at the hornets' nest. If you hit it one of thim is sure to come out and I'll shake my leg at him. He'll be that mad he'll fly down and sting me and the job is done."

Mickey did as he was told.

"Are you ready?" cried Mr. Finn.

"Yes," replied Mickey.

"Well, fire away!" exclaimed his father.

The first stone thrown by the boy grazed the nest, and three angry hornets flew out. Mr. Finn set his teeth for the surgical operation, but the insects flew about his head without touching him.

"Try them once more, Mickey!" shouted Mr. Finn.

The next time the boy's aim was more accurate. The stone cut the nest in two and a host of hornets flew out. This was more than Mr. Finn expected, and he threw up his hands to defend his head. But they descended upon him as the locusts fell upon Egypt. As his hands were in frantic motion to protect his head, the enraged insects naturally attacked the upper portion of his body. They stung him in the neck, upon the cheek and the hands. In answer to his howls of pain, Mrs. Finn rushed frantically to his rescue, only to be driven back again to the shelter of the kitchen.

Driven to desperation by the stabs of the agonizing lances, Mr. Finn jumped from his chair, vaulted the fence, and ran down the road like a deer. Five minutes later, when the hornets had exhausted their fury, Mr. Finn returned to the shanty, his face covered with white blotches. To these his wife, with gentle solicitude, applied poultices of mud, murmuring soothingly:

"There Mike, dear, don't mind! You're a thrifle lumpy, to be sure. You look as if you were a target for rotten apples. Oh, ho! But you're a beauty! Faix, you have a swelled head now for sure!"

"Give over, woman; don't ballyrag me! I'm cured of me rheumatiz! Hurroo!"

Jumping from his chair, Mr. Finn danced a jig on the kitchen floor, until he fell back in his chair exhausted.

When her husband retired for the night, Mrs. Finn ran across the road to tell Mrs. O'Brien all about it. "And the quare thing about it is, Mrs. O'Brien," she concluded, "that Mike had twinty stings on his head and ne'er wan on his leg. But wait till the mornin', Mrs. O'Brien, wait till the mornin'! Oh, the min, the min! Faix, they're worse nor childer whin they have a pain or an ache! Good-night to you and good luck!"

A CURIOUS GARDEN TRICK EXPLAINED

A FEW years ago some of the leading English horticulturists were very much perplexed by certain experiments conducted by a French exhibitor. The demonstrations were conducted in a very open manner, every one was allowed to examine freely, and it was agreed that there was nothing of the ordinary conjuring trick about the plant.

This is what the observers saw: A plant, perhaps a geranium on a rose bush, was brought forward in a large deep box of soil. Sometimes the plant was just growing in the open border. Although the specimen was full of buds, there were no expanded blooms to be seen. The demonstrator informed the onlookers that in about ten minutes he would have the plant covered with widely-opened flowers. The procedure started with the watering of the soil over the roots. As soon as the ground was moist, the whole plant was at once covered with a glass shade. At the end of ten minutes the shade was removed, and the audience saw blooms fully open. Everybody was asked to come forward and look at the plant closely, and also to gather the flowers. These were, of course, closely examined, and the most severe critic was bound to admit that there was nothing faked about the blooms.

The manner in which this instantaneous blooming of plants was brought about has been recently explained. In the first case care was taken to secure specimens in which the buds were as far developed as possible without having actually started to expand. Shortly before the time when it was intended to give the exhibition a shallow trench was dug out all around the plant. This was not quite deep enough to expose the main roots. Then all around this trench small lumps of quicklime were placed, with care not to put them actually in contact with the roots. When the quicklime was in position the soil was filled into the trench, and all was now ready for the experiment.

Sometimes it was declared that the liquid used was a magical concoction; as a matter of fact, it was plain water. After a thorough soaking of the soil the moisture quickly penetrates to the quicklime, and there is a great generation of heat. A certain amount of vapor arises, and this is kept around the plant by the glass shade. The heat in the soil and this warm vapor have an extraordinarily stimulating effect upon the plant, with the result that the flowers' buds are forced open. The opening is quite genuine, so that the blossoms will stand the closest examination.

The idea is an extension of a plan commonly followed by florists when it is desired to induce flowers to open fully, of placing the stalks for five minutes or so in almost boiling water. This has an amazing effect, for in a very short while the buds, previously tightly closed, are fully open.

In the same way wild flowers which have wilted after picking may frequently be revived.

WILL'S BUSINESS

By E. S. S.

I [illegible] pected that there is a mystery in dear William's life, and now I am sure of it. You know he never gets home until so late at night, and I used to lie awake and imagine all sorts of dreadful things. Do you know I actually believed that he might be drinking! But that dear Mrs. Maginnis, when I told her about it, said that if I would only smell of his breath, after he had gone to sleep, I could easily detect the odor of liquor, if he had taken any; so that night I tried it, and actually I have felt ashamed of myself ever since, for his breath was as innocent as a baby's. I could only smell that dreadful strong coffee that he has to drink to keep awake, and I have felt like a miserable, suspicious fool ever since to doubt my Will.

But I was going to tell you about that awful mystery. I lie awake every night thinking about it. It seems to weigh on dear Will's mind, too, for he is always talking in his sleep and saying such queer things! Why, only last night he muttered something about a tray full of something—I could not tell exactly what—but I heard the word "beans," and I suppose that is what he meant. A tray full of beans! The idea! Now what could he have been thinking about? And we haven't had beans for six months, for Will never eats them.

I think some of his relatives have something to do with the mystery, for he often speaks of his aunty in his sleep, and Jack Pott, whoever that is. He must be a villain! And then there is that Pat! I'm certain Willie doesn't like him, either, though he tries to put up with him—for the sake of his relationship, I suppose. I know I heard him say that he guessed he would have to stand Pat. I'm sure I wouldn't try to if I was him. I think they must be three of a kind, as Will says. It's enough to drive him crazy, and with all his business cares, too! You know he is a splendid manager, and makes lots of money in his business. What's his business? Well, now, I ought to be ashamed of myself, but really I don't know. But it is something they do in an office. Will has to use little, round ivory things—to keep count with, he says. I remember about them, because I found a few of them on the floor, where they had fallen out of his pants pockets, and I had holes bored through them, and tied them together with ribbons, and they made the loveliest picture frame you ever saw. I thought I would surprise Will with it, but when he came home with Judge Werner, and they found it on the mantel with Will's picture in it, he didn't seem to appreciate it a bit, and actually told me to take the blamed thing out! Afterwards he told me what the chips—that's what he calls them—were for, and said that it was not good taste for a man to have his business so conspicuously advertised. That was why he didn't like the frame.

Will uses lots of business cards, too. He brought home a package the other night, and when I asked to see them, he said that the boys might kick if he broke the seal before they were there to see him. I don't see what that has to do with it. Broker, did you say? Well, he might be a broker, for now I think of it, I heard him tell the Senator something about breaking somebody.

You ought to meet the Senator! He is the funniest man! And he hasn't the least taste about dressing. Why, his pants have checks as big as your hand—at least some of them have—I mean that that is the kind he generally wears—and he has the largest diamonds I ever saw. They must have cost a pile of money (I refer to the diamonds, not the pants, which are cheap enough looking), but I suppose he can afford it, because they say he runs some kind of a bank—Fair Bank, or something of that kind—and besides he must get a big salary as Senator. He must be from some rural district, for I heard Will say that he is pretty good at stacking. No wonder he has such bad taste!

Will is always talking about "the boys." I think he must mean his clerks and other employees. No, I can't remember any of their names, except their given names, for that is the way Will always refers to them. He often speaks of Tom and Jerry. I suppose they are brothers, or perhaps even twins! I am going to ask him.

But those awful relatives! Will never brings them to see *me!* I wonder why he is so mysterious about them. I know there is some dreadful secret, and, of course, he will never tell me. He does so dislike to have me worry over anything. Well, I can't blame him, but it must be terrible to have such relations. Poor boy! It was only last week that he gave his nice, new overcoat to his Uncle, and went without himself, though the weather was freezing cold!

Well, I must go now, for I see Will and the Senator through the window—why, what are they doing? They seem to be eating dinner, for they are both sitting at the table—and so early! I never knew Will to get hungry so quick before. I think I will slip in the back way and surprise them at their little meal. You see, Will thinks I am visiting with dear mother in the country to-day, and doesn't expect me. Won't he be surprised, though?

Good-by, Mrs. Jones. I have enjoyed my visit very much, but you know a woman's first duty is to her husband. Good-by!

DWARFED TREES

THE struggle for existence is more strongly emphasized in the tree world than in the world of humanity. Indeed, trees make a more determined resistance to climatic forces than do shrubs and flowering plants.

A larch that grew on the wind-swept islands of Quatachoo, that was 20 inches tall and 45 in extent, with a trunk one and one-half inches in diameter, had taken 20 years to grow. Another larch exposed to the winds of Esquimau Island for 110 years had attained a height of three feet, a spread of 11 feet and a trunk some two inches in diameter. After all these years of struggle it was cut down by a traveler.

"DEAD SOT AGIN PEENUCKLE"

The Old Settler's Story

By ED MOTT

"MAJOR," said the squire to the Old Settler at the Sol's Ridge tavern one rainy afternoon, "I'll jist play you one game o' peenuckle to see who pays fer the apple-juice."

"Will ye, squire?" replied the Old Settler. "Then I'll bate ye a bar'l o' juice, b'gosh, ye won't! I'm dead sot ag'in peenuckle. An' if I could git holt o' the man that fust got the game up, I'd clutch him like I would a b'ar! I hain't got nothin' ag'in apple-juice, an' wouldn't mind interducin' myself to a leetle of it right now, but if I hef to wait till I play a game o' peenuckle 'fore I git some, I'll die a bald-headed an' dried-up teetotaller, b'gosh, an' I don't know a death that could be much wuss than that, it don't seem to me! Peenuckle be durned!"

The squire looked surprised. No one had ever heard of pinochle before at Sol's Ridge, much less played it. Seven-up (with an occasional "set-down" with "draw"), was the sole and time-honored game at the Ridge, but the squire had been over to the county seat a few days before, where he had seen pinochle played for the first time, and got an inkling of the game. He had bantered the Old Settler to play pinochle, thinking he would start up and want to know what in Sam Hill pinochle was, or something like that, when the squire would have had great enjoyment in airing his knowledge of the new game, and offering to teach the Old Settler its mysteries. Consequently, the unexpected response of the Old Settler, implying previous contact with the game, took the wind all out of the squire's sail, and he was not only surprised, but was so much surprised that for a time he was speechless, the Old Settler beaming the while in apparent unconsciousness of the effect his reply had had on the squire.

"Yes, sir, squire," said he. "I'm dead sot ag'in peenuckle. If ye don't want to rile me, don't never say nothin' to me about peenuckle."

The squire was mad. He knew that the Old Settler had never seen a game of pinochle played in his life, nor had any idea of how it was played, and here he was talking as if he had had all sorts of experience with it, and the squire was knocked out of having his fun with him over the game.

"What do you know about peenuckle?" exclaimed the squire, snappishly.

"Never you mind what I know about peenuckle!" replied the Old Settler, shaking his head. "I only wish I had holt o' the man that got the game up—that's all!"

"You never played a game of it in your life!" said the squire.

"I didn't, hay?" responded the Old Settler. "Glad ye think so!"

"How would ye play it? Now, jist tell me wunst?" said the squire.

"Play it with cards, o' course," replied the Old Settler, facetiously.

"Ye would, hay?" sneered the squire. "How many cards? Would ye play it with a euchre deck?"

"Didn't I tell ye, squire, that I was dead sot ag'in peenuckle, an' it riled me to hear about it?" said the Old Settler, getting uneasy.

"Would ye play it with a euchre deck?" persisted the squire.

"Squire, when I lived down in the Sugar Swamp deestric', I——"

"Never mind the Sugar Swamp deestric'," exclaimed the squire, interrupting the Old Settler, and pressing him close. "I'm examinin' of ye on peenuckle."

"Peenuckle be durned!" cried the Old Settler, warming up. "Didn't I tell ye——"

"That hain't got nothing to do with the argyment," ejaculated the squire. "If you was goin' to set down here an' hev a game o' peenuckle with me what would ye do?"

"I'd take a pack o' cards, b'gosh, an' I'd set down an' beat ye outen your boots! That's what I'd do, consarn ye!"

"Oh, ye would, hay?" said the squire, recovering his temper as the Old Settler lost his. "You'd take a pack o' card, hay—a reg'lar ol'-fashioned pack o' cards?"

"Yes, sir!" exclaimed the Old Settler. "A reg'lar ol'-fashioned pack o' cards!"

"No more'n that?" asked the squire, with a grin of satisfaction on his face.

"Course not!" replied the Old Settler. "More'n that? Gosh almighty, squire! I could beat ye with half a pack!"

"Peenuckle?"

"Yes, peenuckle, consarn ye!"

Then the squire laughed. He was never so pleased in his life.

"Major," said he, "I hope your mem'ry ain't failin' of ye! Two packs o' cards is what ye'd hef if ye sot down to hev a game o' peenuckle. Two reg'lar ol'-fashioned packs o' cards! It takes two packs' o' cards to play a game o' peenuckle, major."

"All the better!" said the Old Settler. "Then I'd beat ye twice as bad, b'gosh! An' now I'll say it ag'in. Peenuckle be durned! I'm dead sot ag'in it, an' if I only had holt o' the man that got it up, I'd clutch him like I would a b'ar!"

The squire chuckled and chuckled, but said nothing. He had enjoyed himself a little after all, by cornering the Old Settler on the pinochle question. The Old Settler mused a while, and by and by said:

"Two packs, hay? Two packs?"

Then he pondered again, and presently brightened up and looked pleased.

"Yes, sir, squire," said he, "I'm dead sot ag'in it."

But the squire said nothing, plainly to the Old Settler's disappointment. He had something on his mind, though, and was not inclined to let it stay there. So after waiting some time for the squire to show some curiosity in the matter, and the squire failing to show any (knowing it wasn't necessary), he said:

"Do ye recomember Pete Golip, squire?"

"Never heerd on him," replied the squire.

"Glad to hear it," said the Old Settler. "I was afreerd

he mowt be a relation o' your'n, an' ye mowt feel bad when I tell ye that if Pete was here, or if I know'd where I could git my hands on him, I'd clutch him like I would a b'ar, b'gosh! An' I'll tell ye fer why.

"We'd had a fust-rate season fer ven'son, an' b'ar meat, an' wildcats, an' foxes, an' wild honey, an' minks an' all o' setch. Me an' Joe Groner hunted an' trapped together, an' had cleaned the woods pooty well out. We know'd there was one sockin' ol' b'ar left, with more'n four hundred pound o' meat on him, an' a hide that was cheap at thirty dollars. We wanted him the wust kind, more to keep Pete Golip from gittin' him than fer the money there was in him. Pete wa'n't popular, not a bit, with nobody. But that ol' b'ar fit shy o' me an' Joe, an' he fit shy o' Pete, too.

"'Joe,' I useter say, 'that b'ar won't never give us a show not till he gits afeard that Pete 'll git his clutches on him. Then,' says I, 'he'll come an' act'lly beg us to put him outen his mis'ry. That b'ar,' I says, 'hates Pete Golip above all natur' o' b'ars a hatin', an' that's a powerful lot,' I says. 'That b'ar,' I says, 'is bound to be our meat as soon as Pete gits him cornered,' an' I says, 'all we've got to do,' I says, 'is to watch an' pray, an' not disapp'int the b'ar when he comes a-seekin' on us an' beggin' on us to save him from the disgrace o' turnin' up his toes to Pete,' I says.

"'Eliphalet,' I says to Joe, 'that b'ar shan't be disapp'inted,' says he.

"Late in the fall there comes a sousin' big freshet in the creek, an' that was our chance to git our pelts an' meat down to market. We built a float an' loaded her with 'em, an' run her safe an' sound to the mouth o' the creek, where we sold 'em all fer more money than tuther one on us hed ever see afore. We hed pocketfuls on it—nough to buy the best farm in the hull county.

"The season wa'n't over yit, an' me an' Joe mogged back to the woods to git another stock o' hide an' taller, an' 'specially to save that sockin' ol' b'ar from the clutches o' Pete Golip. Pete had a cabin on the head waters, an' Joe says to me:

"'Eliphalet,' says he, 'less me an' you go up to Pete's cabin an' shake our money in his face, an' make him feel aggervated, 'cause Pete hain't had no very hefty luck this year, an' all the skins an' things he has managed to git he's traded fer pork an' a jug or two o' rum—less go up an' aggervate him,' says Joe.

"I was the willin'est kind, an' up to Pete's cabin on the head waters to aggervate him we went. When we got there Pete wa'n't in the cabin. We sot down to wait fer him, 'cause we was pinin' to aggervate him. We hadn't sot there long 'fore we seen a nice, fat stack o' cards on the table. We looked at it a spell, an' pooty soon Joe says:

"'Eliphalet,' says he, 'why not hev a leetle quiet rassel at draw fer a dollar or two while we're waitin',' says he.

"There wa'n't nobody could beat me at draw in them days, an' so I says to Joe:

"'Joe,' I says, 'I hain't got no conscientious scruples ag'in it,' I says.

"So we sot down an' begun to play. I held some sockin' hands, an' so did Joe, an' by an' by he dealt me a hand that made my eyes bulge out. I bet it, too. But Joe seemed to hev a tol'able hand hisself, fer he riz me stiff as the bristles on a mad buck's neck.

"'Joseph,' I says, 'it hurts me wuss than missin' a fat doe to set here an' take all your year's trappin' an' shootin' away from ye,' I says, 'but I can't see no way out of it, b'gosh, unless ye lay down,' I says.

"'Eliphalet,' says Joe, 'it'd be a blessin' if your heart would git to feelin' so soft that ye'd let up on me,' says he. 'A blessin' fer you, I mean,' says he, 'cause this here hand 'll leave ye with pooty tough sleddin' this winter if ye keep wantin' to see what it's made of.'

"I jist laughed, an' riz him a leetle more'n I had afore. An' there we sot, a-raisin' back an' forth an' to an' fro, with all frien'ship ceased, when of a suddent who should come a-bouncin' inter the cabin but the sockin' big b'ar that me an' Joe was achin' to git our clutches on. He looked orful down in the mouth, an' got right down on his knees, lookin' at us the pleadin'est kind. But me an' Joe didn't hev no time fer b'ar jist then, an' we never give a thought to Pete Golip. The b'ar drug hisself around, an' came a little nigher an' nigher, but we didn't pay no 'tention to him. I riz Joe on my hand, an' he riz me, an' we riz an' riz an' riz, till pooty nigh all our money was piled up, waitin' fer one or t'other on us to call or lay down. The b'ar kep' a-edgin' nigher an' nigher, an' by an' by actu'lly came an' rubbed hisself ag'in my leg, like a cat, tryin' to 'tract my attention. Joe had jist give me an orful raise, an' I up an' give the b'ar a raise. I give him a kick that riz him clean offen his feet.

"'Go 'way!' I says. 'Git out o' here!' I says. 'Don't ye see we hain't got no time fer b'ar?' I says.

"The ol' b'ar picked hisself up an' walked to'ards the door. When he got there, he turned an' give me a pleadin' an' longin' look that I'll never fergit to my dyin' day, an' went out. Joe an' me kep' on a-raisin' an' a-raisin'. 'Fore long we heerd a gun go off, but we hadn't time to think about it. I had jist give Joe a raise that I thort 'd settle him, when in come Pete Golip. We jist nodded to him, an' he come up to the table. He looked at Joe's hand, an' then walked over an' looked at mine. Then he bust out a-larfin'. He laid down an' rolled an' hollered. We got skeert, fer we thought Pete had been took crazy. We quit bettin', an' jist looked at him. Pooty soon he got up.

"'Playing draw?' says he, bustin' ag'in.

"We told him we was, an' that we didn't see nothin' so durn funny about it.

"'Don't ye?' says Pete. 'Seems to me,' says he, 'that two fellers playin' draw, an' each one on 'em holdin' four kings, is about as funny as they make it,' says he, an' busts ag'in.

"Sure enough, squire, me an' Joe both held four kings! I looked savage at Joe, an' Joe looked savage at me.

"'You consarned idiot!" says Pete. 'That ain't no poker deck! That's a peenuckle deck that me an' Sam Skelters has be'n usin' all fall!' says Pete, bustin' ag'in, wuss than ever.

"Me an' Joe jist sorted out our money an' didn't say a word. Arter Pete got through bustin', he says:

"'Mebbe ye mowt a heeerd me shoot a while ago?' says he. 'I tumbled the sockin' ol' b'ar that's be'n fightin' shy of us fer these two years,' says he.

"Then me an' Joe cussed. The b'ar had come in an' give us a show at him, an' begged us to not let Pete Golip git him, an' we hed kicked him out on account o' them two hands!

"'Squire,' said the Old Settler, after a pause, 'is there any wonder that I'm dead sot ag'in peenuckle? An' sence I be'n a-thinkin' on it, I b'lieve that Pete Golip was the man that got the game up, an' if I could git my hands on him, I'd clutch him, b'gosh, like I would a b'ar! An', squire, if you don't want to rile me, don't never say peenuckle to me ag'in!'"

A great story by a great writer coming in two weeks. Don't miss this remarkable treat.

A STRAY DOG

By ORLEY E. GRAY

HE strayed in out of No Man's Land on the morning after the first great enemy offensive to the north, as powder-burnt, smoke-begrimed, and forlorn a specimen of what had once been a fine bull-terrier as one would ever care to see. When he came into machine gun nest No. 23, he was heart-broken and in search of friends; he looked into Lieutenant Ellington's eyes and his search was at an end.

"Poor little Bull," Ellington said, as he picked him up and smoothed his singed hair. "He is probably the sole survivor of some crack English company. Most of them have dogs for mascots, you know."

"Yes, and he will probably be the sole survivor of an American machine gun crew soon, if he is lucky enough to escape," Marwell said. "In our exposed position, we don't stand one chance in a thousand of escaping total destruction if the baby-killers make a massed attack like the one to the north yesterday."

"A big attack is coming, too," Rayfel put in. "Tomorrow, if my guess is right. I'd rather be killed first and captured afterward than the other way around, but I hope to click off a hundred or so of the dirty beasts before either thing happens."

"I was just thinking," Ellington said, "that we ought to mine the nest with those extra explosives in the 'back cellar,' and then if they do get in on us we can change the killing program into an aviation stunt where we will have company."

"By the beard of the kaiser and the tails of other dogs, but it should be done," Marwell affirmed.

"We have no orders to that effect," Captain Barclay said, "but who is to know the difference after it is all over, as I suspect that it will be before we are relieved."

And so it came that, in the misty dawn of the following morning, Lieutenant Ellington stopped in his work of connecting an electric battery with the finished mine to pat the head of the solemn-looking terrier, who had earnestly watched the whole proceeding, and say: "Boys, this is an extraordinary dog. I believe that he knows what we are doing and why, and very likely he understands what we are saying as well."

"See here, Bull," he said, addressing the dog, "this little cord is connected with the battery and one good, hard pull will blow Nest No. 23 to the place where the kaiser will be before long. When they come in on us, it will send a number of the butchers out of the game, and it will take those of us who chance to be left along with them. But you can sneak out when the fun starts and be in the clear. Do you understand, old boy?"

And Bull gave a low, soft bark to show that he understood. Suddenly the enemy opened a terrific machine-gun fire which knocked the sandbags about and scattered dirt and fragments into the trenches. Then the heavy artillery opened up and huge shells went screaming overhead or exploded in the works at the rear.

"There goes our communication trench," Captain Barclay shouted, as a huge shell sent up tons of earth, completely demolishing the trench some fifty rods away.

"Here they come," Mirney screamed from his peephole station, and then the American machine guns began sputtering away.

Ellington leaped to his gun and looked over. The "Butchers" were over the top and coming across No Man's Land in grand style. The drifting mist rendered them an indistinct mass, completely swallowing up the individuals. Already Rayfel's gun was mowing a swath in the front ranks of the mass. Ellington started in where Rayfel's swath left off and traversed the line until he came to the point where the widening gap attested to the deadliness of Mirney's work. Back and forth across his section Ellington played his stream of death; the front line was all down, then the second and third, and still they came nearer in a great surging mass. Three-fourths of the way across No Man's Land and the attackers were getting close to the American trenches and very close indeed to the advanced machine-gun nests. So close were they to Nest No. 23 that Ellington could see the eyes of the oncoming Huns even through the smoke and mist.

Rayfel's gun went silent on the left and Ellington was starting in on another belt with a muttered "Last round," when the attack broke down and the attackers quickly retreated to their trenches.

The artillery fire resumed and a great cloud of smoke went up from the enemy lines and came drifting down the wind to mingle with the now slightly clearing mist.

Ellington hastily cleaned, arranged his ammunition, and then stood fingering his rifle bearings and peering into the wall of smoke. Suddenly he saw a mass of helmeted figures break through the smoke a dozen rods away, and once more he set himself to the grim task before him. Then, above the din, he heard the roar of an aeroplane, and, out of the smoke above and behind, a hail of death came sweeping through Nest No. 23. He heard the guns of his comrades go silent and knew that the demon airman was doing deadly work; he knew, however, that his work was before him, so he did not look up, but kept his stream of death playing in the faces of the charging butchers, now almost upon him. Suddenly he felt a shock; something was wrong with his legs—he was falling. He was momentarily unconscious, and recovered to find himself lying on his face, surrounded by his dead comrades, all of whom had fallen in the sudden hail of death. Helmeted figures were filling the nest.

He raised himself on his elbows and tried to crawl to the piece of cord lying on the trench floor, a few feet away, but the lower part of his body refused to obey; his back was broken. He gritted his teeth and started dragging his body by his elbows a few inches at a time, but one of the Butchers saw him, and with a face awry with passion, clubbed his rifle and stepped quickly over to dash out the wounded man's brains.

Ellington saw him swing his gun aloft—and then a little, battered, brindle form brushed past his face, grasped the string firmly in his teeth, braced his feet, and—a mortally wounded American lieutenant, a brindle bull-terrier with a heroic soul, and some threescore helmeted servants of the devil and the kaiser were suddenly and violently ushered into the world beyond!

THE FATAL PRINTS

A Serial Detective Story

By WILLIAM S. HALL

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"I WAS greatly surprised when I found that he had gone out, and was a little nervous, thinking he may have penetrated my disguise, taken the alarm and skipped. To make sure that he had not left me in the lurch, I again entered his room, by means of a skeleton key, and found everything just as they were the evening before.

"'Oh, he hasn't skipped yet,' I said to myself, as I slipped out and regained my own room just in time to escape being caught.

"I concluded that he had gone to call on Dora again, and so, to make the thing sure, went there to call on her myself after first going to my regular quarters and laying aside my disguise. On reaching the house, Dora received me with less cordiality than usual, I thought, and it sent a chill to my heart.

"'You have been very busy since you were here last,' she said, 'as I have not seen you for several days.'

"'Yes, very busy, indeed,' I replied.

"'Have you made any progress in your search for the murderer?'

"'I think I have.'

"'How much?' she asked.

"'Can you wait till to-morrow to learn all?'

"'Yes, if you won't tell me now.'

"'Of course I can't tell you now. That would be very unwise, you know.'

"'Because you think a woman can't keep a secret.'

"'By no means. I happen to know several ladies who can keep secrets much better than men can.'

"'Indeed!'

"'Yes. I knew a lady who carried a secret many years, and it died with her, and it is a secret yet.'

"'What in the world was it?'

"'Her age.'

"'Oh, you wretch!' and she shook her fist at me, and laughed in a sweet, silvery way that did my heart good.

"'Presently the door-bell rang, and a minute or two later Ned Crenshaw entered the room.

"Dora received him as she did me, but seemed even more lively than before he came.

"'Hello, Croly, old fellow!' he exclaimed, grasping my hand and wringing it cordially. 'I am glad to see you.'

"I said I was glad to see him, but it was a lie—a square out-and-out lie. I didn't want to see him there. I was getting madly jealous and wished him at the bottom of the bottomless pit. We talked of nearly everything we could think of, and time was flying fast when Cochran was shown into the room. We greeted him pleasantly, which greeting he returned civilly but coldly. Ned was really the only happy one in the party.

"'Look here, Miss Dora!' he called in a jolly tone of voice, 'you will have to provide some young ladies for our friends. Three to one makes an odd crowd, you know.'

"'Why, yes,' she said, laughing good-naturedly, 'or else have you all call on different evenings.'

"'Oh, you naughty flirt! You want a different beau for each night in the week, do you?'

"'Why not?' she asked. 'Then one could learn which would be the best one to stick to.'

"'By Jove, but that's a new idea!' he exclaimed. 'Let's see—one for the opera on Monday—Tuesday the theater—Wednesday the minstrels and oysters—Thursday concert and ice-cream—Friday a cabaret, and Saturday open for any change of programme that might suggest itself. By Jove, it's a comprehensive thing. If I was a millionaire I'd take the contract for eight nights in the week!'

"We all burst into a hearty laugh over the thing, and then the conversation turned into another channel. Ned was a fine talker, and managed to lead the conversation. I kept my tongue in pretty well, but Cochran was left way behind. He sat like a dummy, scowling at both Ned and myself, joining in with a sickly smile when anything funny was said. After a while the conversation turned on my search for the murderer.

"'Have you found the shoe to match the mark made in the mortar yet?' Ned asked.

"At that Cochran sprang to his feet and glared at both of us.

"'W-w-hat was that!' he faltered.

"'The man who murdered Mr. Creighton left his shoe-print on a pile of lime mortar on a board in the victim's room. Our friendly Croly has kept the print and is looking for the shoe. That's his clue.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'and I've followed it up pretty well, too. I found it to be a number 7 shoe, with a peculiar mark on the bottom about an inch from the heel. The shoe had been recently half-soled. I set out to find the cobbler who did the repairing, and, after visiting several hundred shops, found one up on the west side where a young cobbler was in the habit of making such marks on the shoes of his customers. I hunted him up, for he had left the shop, and from him finally got a description of the man.'

"'The deuce!' exclaimed Ned.

"'Yes.'

"'What kind of a man was he?' Dora asked, deeply interested.

"'He said he was about Cochrane's size, with a dark-brown mustache, and a mole on the left side of his face, about an inch from——'

"'It's a lie—a—lie!' shrieked Cochran, turning wildly toward the door.

"I sprang to my feet and pointed a revolver at his head.

"'Halt, or you are a dead man!'

"'Oh, God! I didn't do it,' he groaned, staggering back in terror from the muzzle of the revolver.

"'Yes, you did,' said I, 'and you shot me, too. I've got the proof of it, you cowardly wretch!

"'Mercy—mercy!' he gasped, dropping to his knees on the carpet. 'Let me go, and I will tell all. Oh, God, pity me! Yes—yes, I did it, but spare me! I didn't know what I was doing. Dora—Dora, it was for your sake I did it—to keep him from making a will and disinheriting you. You can save me. If you will tell him to let me go, he will do it. Save me—save me!'

"Dora and Ned were horror-struck at the sudden relevation of the horrible crime. The heiress shrank from him in horror, and buried her face in her hands. When she looked up again the bracelets were on the murderer's hands.

"Then turning to Dora I said:

"'Pardon me for creating this scene in the house. I sought to arrest him at his room, but he was not there. I am glad it has happened, however, as you two are witnesses to his confession of the crime. Do you forgive me, Dora?'

"'Yes, yes,' she said, coming forward and giving me her hand. 'You have acted like a true, brave friend all along, and I shall never forget your kindness.'

"Then turning to the trembling wretch, I seized him by the collar, and said:

"'Come, get up and——'

"'Mercy—mercy!' he gasped. 'Dora—Dora—plead for me!'

"'Do you want any help, Croly?' Ned asked.

"'Not the least,' I replied. 'I can manage a cowardly thing like this with the bracelets on my own hands.'

"I pulled him out on the street, rung up the wagon, and escorted him to headquarters, where, after he had given his name, age and occupation, he was locked up in a cell. The whole detective world was electrified by the revelations of the case, as they came out by degrees. The trial was attended by eminent detectives from all parts of the country. The fatal shoe-print on the lime mortar settled the case, and he was convicted, sentenced and electrocuted. That was the celebrated Creighton case, boys, of which you have heard so much. It made my reputation and fortune, and now I am in the field only because I don't want to lay by and rust. As to the heiress, she came into possession of her uncle's wealth a little while after the arrest of the murderer, and then went to Europe—to England rather—to hunt up her relations. Whilst over there I read an account, in the New York papers, of her marriage to Ned Crenshaw. That was the wound I spoke of, boys, which had never healed. It's all right now. It doesn't hurt any more, and everything is serene.

"They live in Philadelphia now, and I have never seen her since she came back from England. Graham finally married Tillie Truxton, and they have now a large shoe stoe uptown, besides a big family of girls and boys. Their eldest boy is named Ben Croly Graham, and a fine young man he is, too. The Conan gang were all sent up for various terms, for crimes committed at different times. They served their time, came back to the city, and tried to get square with me. They never succeeded. This ends the case—now for another round and a good-night."

The glasses were filled, emptied, and the boys separated.

(*The end*)

A new Detective serial begins in our next number. It is entitled

A COAT SLEEVE

By G. G. SMALL

Be sure to read the opening chapters of this exciting romance

A NOVEL SCARECROW

IN the Philippines a novel contrivance is employed for frightening birds off the rice fields. In a corner of each rice field there may be seen a little house. Over the field is strung a network of bejuco, or Indian cane, much the same as that of twine strung over our corn fields at home. But the Igorrote "goes us one better." He puts his child up in the little house in the corner and keeps his little fellow pulling at a strip of bejuco, which connects with those in the field and so keeps them all in motion. It is a venturesome crow that is going to fly into that arrangement. In some places the network is kept in motion by another ingenious contrivance. Under a little waterfall a block of wood is suspended. The block is so shaped that the water, on striking it, drives it out away from the fall, and of course down, because of the weight of the water striking it. This pulls the string connected with the network over the field. Then, of course, the block is, by the reaction, pulled up again to its former level and swung back into the waterfall, and so on indefinitely.

A QUEER POSTOFFICE

TWO letters deposited at one of the Galapagos Islands in 1917 have just been delivered to their addressed owners. The letters were in a barrel placed on the beach, left there by the crew of the British steamship Amphion in the nineties. They were "collected" by a native of Ecuador. It would be hard to find a lonelier spot for postal service than the Galapagos. Eight hundred miles west of the mainland of Ecuador lie 15 mountainous, barren islands of volcanic origin. A number of years ago Ecuador supported a penal colony on one of the islands. The Galapagos are now uninhabited and the only traces of former occupation are the pigs, donkeys, cattle and horses left behind by the convicts. Certain facts in regard to the fauna of the Galapagos make these islands of great interest to scientific investigators. Species of tortoises abound which are unknown to any other part of the world. What is more curious, some species are restricted to certain islands of the group. This fact is partly explained by the deep channels and strong currents which separate the islands. Intermigration is prevented by isolation.

The romance of the Galapagos lies in the fact of their having some time possessed a real Robinson Crusoe. A vessel anchoring at one of the islands sent a crew ashore. To the amazement of the sailors, they were approached by a man apparently wild, little clothed, and with long hair and beard. A number of years before a party had searched the island for a valuable moss. This man had become separated from his companions, was left behind, and since then had lived on roots and fruits and what meat he could procure with his spear, which consisted of his knife fastened on a long pole.

CURRENT NEWS

WOMEN BARBERS IN NEW YORK PROVE TO BE A SUCCESS

Women barbers are being employed in increasing numbers in the shops in New York. They are taking the places of men who have been called for military service, and from all appearances their advent is welcomed by customers. Barber shops throughout the country, particularly in Western States, are said, also, to be employing women in considerable numbers.

WOODEN BICYCLE TIRES IN HOLLAND

Dutch newspapers say that a bicycle dealer in the Province of Gelderland, Holland, has invented bicycle tire made of elmwood. It is said to have been tested satisfactorily on the clay and gravel roads of Holland. If successful the invention will be a great boon to Holland. Probably no other country uses relatively so many bicycles—nearly a million, or a bicycle to every seven or eight people. Rubber tires are now practically unobtainable.

BOUNTY BUSINESS IN KANSAS BOOMING

Although the wolf and coyote season is scarcely begun, the county clerk of Republic County, Kansas, reports the bounty business as first class, he having received 23 scalps in one day recently. Between nine to eleven is the largest number yet brought in by one party. Bounties are also allowed on the heads of pocket gophers, crows and crows' eggs. A couple of farmers residing north of Scandia found a nest of 20 young wolves.

COMPLETE SHIP IN FIVE DAYS

Belfast, Ireland, has set a new record in shipbuilding that in ordinary times would be sure of standing perhaps for years. The workmen completed a ship in five working days after it was launched. The ship took the ways on August 22 and the installation of the machinery began the same day. On August 26 the vessel got up steam for the first time, and two days later trials were completed. On August 29 the ship was ready for cargo service. Recently the Department of Labor was informed of a launching in Maine, where installation of machinery began within two hours after the vessel took the water.

LABOR DEFIES GERMAN AUTHORITY

Labor is showing its power against Germany, both in Belgium and in the Ukraine, according to reports that have reached the Department of Labor. Not all of these have been verified, but it is pretty certain that large numbers of Belgian workmen have refused point-blank to do any work for the occupants of their nation, and now similar word comes from the Ukraine, where apparently a condition approaching the general strike is existing. The railroad men, it is reported, have walked out by thousands at the instance of agitators, who call upon the men to refuse to work in order that Germany may not ship food and other supplies away from their own country. The strike organizers have spent, it is said, 10,000,000 rubles in anti-German propaganda. The peasants are no better pleased than the railroad workers by the German occupation, and are reported only awaiting a favorable opportunity for revolt.

WOMEN GATHER CROPS

The bureau of employment of the State Industrial Service, of New York, called upon 400 girls and women to assist the farmers in gathering potatoes, harvesting crops of all kinds and general farm work. A number of the workers helped to care for the cranberry crop. Each woman was expected to serve at least three weeks. The workers during their term of employment lived in groups under a supervisor, a separate house being provided for each group.

CAUGHT A BIG FISH

Three men in the small power boat St. Francis caught a 228-pound halibut midway between Scituate and Minot's light, Massachusetts. Mussimecci Paoli, owner of the boat, was hauling in a pollock attached to a small hook when the halibut appeared near the surface and swallowed the pollock. Paoli, somewhat frightened at the size of the big fish, shouted to his mates to assist in getting it aboard. He thrust a gaff into the halibut and Mariano Pinissi gaffed the fish near the mouth. Fully five minutes' time was required to get the fish into the boat, which was several times almost capsized in the struggle.

TAKES 150 POUNDS PRESSURE TO BREAK AN EGG

Nature executed a wonderful piece of workmanship when she put the shell around the egg. Most of us have an idea that the shell is fragile. It is—sometimes; but scientists have established the fact that the average pressure under which white eggs break is 112 pounds, says *Popular Science Monthly*. Strange to say, brown eggs are stronger than white ones. It takes a pressure average of 155 pounds to break them, the minimum being 125 pounds and the maximum 175 pounds. When it is considered that the thickness of an average eggshell is .013 and the diameter of the eggs one and three-quarter inches, some idea may be formed of their enormous resistance.

SWEDISH WOMAN SLEEPS FOR 32 YEARS

Rip Van Winkle's long nap has had several counterparts in real life, the most notable being the long-distance sleeping record established by Caroline Ilsson, a Swedish woman, who fell into a trance on December 24, 1875, and did not wake up until 1907.

On the day before Christmas, 1875, she returned from school slightly ill and went to bed. Although the following morning ushered in the great holiday of the year, Caroline slept on and all efforts to awaken her were futile. Physicians were unable to diagnose her case, which, after she had been asleep a year, was the subject of interested study by all the medical men of Europe. Caroline slept from girlhood to womanhood, being kept alive by the administration of two glasses of milk daily. Two or three times during her sleep she was aroused sufficiently to take a step or two, but always fell back unconscious and continued her sleep. In 1905 a gradual improvement in her condition was noted, and one day in 1907 she suddenly recovered complete consciousness. She was able to recall every detail of her youth and showed no physical weakness or mental defects from her long sleep.

POTATO WEARS A WEDDING RING

Here is a most unusual phenomenon—a potato with a wedding ring entwined about it. The potato with the ring was recently brought to the store of Frederick C. Newhall, Lynn, Mass., by a customer who found it in a potato patch while digging up potatoes. The ring had been lost for many years and was practically given up forever when it turned up in this unusual manner to the owner. The latter lost the ring while putting coal on a fire. The ashes were thoroughly sifted, but no ring was found. The ashes were later placed in a field where some potatoes were planted. When the potatoes matured they were dug up and one of them was found to have grown right in through the band of gold.

PROJECTILE ENTERS BODY WITHOUT WOUND

A soldier wounded at Verdun, April 23, 1916, by several splinters of shell arrived at the American ambulance with the diagnosis of superficial wounds of the right thigh, left leg, forehead and scalp. Many splinters were removed and the patient was completely healed of his wounds 45 days after his arrival at the hospital. Just as he was about to be discharged he complained of abdominal pain and said he had the sensation of a foreign body in his abdomen. The Roentgen ray showed on the posterior wall of the stomach an ulceration of a half-inch in diameter. Exactly at the place indicated by the Roentgen ray an ulcer was found and behind it a shell splinter very irregular and sharp pointed, about a half-inch thick. Attention is called to the possibility of a soldier having a splinter in his abdomen without any appreciable trace of a skin wound.

FIRST CHINESE PENCIL FACTORY OPENS

China's first pencil factory was officially opened on June 26, 1918, when the China Pencil Co. threw open its new plant for inspection. The company is an Anglo-Chinese enterprise, organized and promoted by a few English and Chinese business men, and hopes to obtain a large share of the pencil trade in the Far East hitherto controlled by the Germans and Austrians. The new company has a paid-up capital of $100,000 and a present daily capacity of 100 gross of pencils. The machinery is of Japanese manufacture, but it is planned to secure additional equipment from England or America. Materials—graphite and wood strips—are also imported from America. Manufacture both for export and local consumption will be carried on. At present the output is confined to one good, serviceable grade of black pencil, but other grades will be added, as well as colored and copying pencils and crayons, if the trade warrants.

A SNAKE-KILLER

The secretary-bird, so named from the tuft carried on his neck, which resembles an old-fashioned quill carried behind a clerk's ear, takes his scientific name serpentarius from the fact that he feeds on serpents, preferably the most venomous species. When the serpent sees his foe he makes piteous efforts to hide. The bird reaches his prey in four long, hopping strides, fixes one of its claws around the neck of the serpent close to its head, and, with implacable patience, with the other claw, unrolls the coiled body. The secretary plays with the serpent as a cat plays with a mouse. Its methods and unconscious cruelty are the same. After 15 minutes of torment the serpent ceases to struggle. Then the secretary swallows it at a gulp and goes in search of another victim, for his appetite is insatiable.

SHOE WASHING EXPERIMENT TRIED

Experiments in "laundering" shoes are being conducted at various camps by the Conservation and Reclamation Division of the Quartermaster Corps. The method used is the same employed by the American Expeditionary Forces. A solution composed of one quart of strong disinfectant to 50 gallons of water was used to wash about 200 army shoes in a standard laundry machine. The solution used is germicide, antiseptic and deodorant. After 14 minutes washing the shoes were removed, dried for about an hour and then resoled. The results were found to be highly satisfactory. After the shoes were laundered and repaired they are greased with dubbin to make them more pliable and at the same time to preserve the leather. The satisfactory results obtained from these first experiments in laundering shoes has encouraged the Conservation and Reclamation Division of the Quartermaster Corps to extend its operations along this line to all the camps and cantonments throughout the United States.

MAYBE YOUR CHAIR IS TOO HIGH

The criticism which has been made in recent years regarding the too great height of school seats also applies to the chairs in the home and office, according to persons who have been giving the matter careful study and who have made practical tests along this line. The average office or home chair, it is claimed, is so high that when occupied by a person of medium stature or less the front edge of the seat presses against the limbs, causing more or less pronounced congestion of the blood and nervous irritation, with a corresponding loss of efficiency, says *Popular Mechanics*. One person interested in this question shortened the legs of a number of chairs in his home and declared that the increased comfort of the family completely justified the rather drastic measure. When one is seated and the feet are flat on the floor the chair should be sufficiently low, it is said, to lift the limbs above the front edge of the chair to permit the open hand to be inserted between either limb and the chair seat.

WOUNDS STITCHED BY ANTS

The mandibles of ants and of several coleopterous insects, scarities in particular, have long been employed in Asiatic surgery. This usage is of the most ancient date with the surgeons of India and is perpetuated in our day in Algeria by the Arab operators and to some extent by the Turks in Asia and the Greek barbers of Syria. According to an English entomological journal, the barber presses upon the edge of the cut with the fingers of the left hand and applies each ant by means of forceps held in the right hand. The mandibles of the ant are widely opened, the animal being in the defensive attitude, and as the insect is gradually brought near the wound it seizes the projecting surface and immediately forces its mandibles through the flesh and remains in this attitude, pressing the one mandible against the other with force and consequently holds the two edges together. Then the barber separates the head from the thorax with a snip of the scissors, and the head with the mandibles remaining in place, continues its function, while the thorax and abdomen fall to the ground. The same operation is repeated with other ants until at times there may be a dozen pairs of mandibles placed at regular intervals, so that through its whole length the skin is united by this very ingenious procedure. The heads are allowed to remain a few days, after which, since the healing has been effected, they are loosened, and having performed their office, are henceforth useless.

1,800 PLAYS WERE WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY SPANISH DRAMATIST LOPE DE VEGA

Not a few modern writers have attracted attention by their ceasless flow of new ideas and the rapidity with which they work, but the literary output of the most prolific of them is snail-like when compared to the record of Lope de Vega, the first celebrated Spanish dramatist. When he died, in 1653, at the age of seventy-three, he left behind him no less than 1,800 plays, every one of which had been produced during his lifetime. No other dramatic writer in history has ever approached this record.

Lope began to dictate poetry at the age of five, before he could write, and at seventeen he wrote and produced his first drama, "Dorothea." Poet, soldier, courtier, adventurer, ecclesiastic, wherever he was or whatever his occupation, he always found time to write plays. His published plays—the less objectionable ones—fill twenty-six quarto volumes, but those which were not printed were thrice as many. On one occasion Lope de Vega wrote five plays in two weeks, and a drama a week was considered child's play by this prolific writer.

PROBABLE MORTALITY FROM PRESENT WAR

In trying to form some notion of the casualty rate which our armies will probably incur abroad it is of interest to review the mortality rate in the British army during the South African war, of which careful analyses have been made. That war indicated a mortality rate from war and disease of 38 deaths per 1,000 per annum among men and 53 per 1,000 per annum among officers during the whole duration of the war. The number of officers who were killed and died from wounds was nearly double the number of fatalities from disease, while among the men the reverse was the case. About twice as many died from disease as from wounds—an illustration of better sanitary conditions, etc., among officers. During the intensive year of the war—1899-1900—the mortality among officers from wounds and disease ran up to 87 per 1,000.

PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Extensive phosphate deposits on Nauru or Pleasant Island and Ocean Island, located about midway between the Marshall and Solomon Islands, northwest of New Zealand, are said to be the most valuable deposits of the kind in the world. The islands, of coral formation, have for ages been the rookeries of sea birds, which have deposited guano that has impregnated the limestone, forming phosphate rock 40 feet in depth. The quantity of phosphates available is estimated at 500,000,000 tons, and as fertilizer it is said to rival the famous nitrate fields of Chili. This phosphate possesses 85 per cent of manurial value, as against about 27 per cent for the best English phosphate, according to a statement in the New Zealand *Dairyman*.

Before the war these islands belonged to Germany, but have since been taken over by the British government, and now it is urged that they be turned over to Australia and New Zealand, since much of this phosphate is needed for the agricultural districts of these two countries.

LAST RELIC ANCIENT RIVER BED

One of the most commanding and picturesque natural sentinels in the western part of the United States is "The Smokestack" rock in Banner County, Nebraska, writes Guy Elliott Mitchell in *American Forestry*. This singular formation surmounts a great rocky buttress which rises several hundred feet and overlooks a valley of large dimensions. Sharply silhouetted against the sky "The Smokestack" is clearly visible for scores of miles. A knowledge of its composition, however, impresses the observer more than anything else with the wonderful changes that have been wrought by nature in the Western country.

The smokestack itself is a different kind of rock from the larger mass on which it rests. It is a composition of clay and pebbles, now tightly cemented together, but which in long ages past was a river bed. It is one of the few remaining fragments of an old river channel; the entire valley which now spreads away below the smokestack was once filled in, a great river flowing hundreds of feet above the present level of the land. Over enormous stretches of time the elements gradually wore away the great plateau until it became a valley, and for some reason a small portion of river bed resisted the ages of erosion and now stands a monument to its own strength and toughness.

TUNNELS AND GEOLOGY

Geologists owe much of their knowledge of the Alps to the tunnels which have been bored through those mountains to make railway routes between the northern and southern parts of Europe. There has been no more important discovery made in this way than during the construction of the Loetschberg tunnel. This was the unexpected piercing of a great coal seam in the center of a mass of much younger Triassic stone. The Loetschberg tunnel proved a much more difficult proposition than the St. Gothard tunnel, which is driven almost entirely through hard gneiss. At Andermatt and Airola one can see in the quarries how under tremendous pressure the Jurassic chalk has been turned into marble. In the case of the Loetschberg the geological profile presented the unusual sight of primitive rock piled on top of stratified rock.

All the Alpine tunnels are run on straight lines except the Loetschberg, which was built on a curve. This was necessary because of unforeseen obstacles in the interior composition of the mountain and resulted in an expenditure of $500,000. The engineers did not believe that the Kander stream, which flows down the mountainside, would interfere with the boring of a tunnel 600 feet below the river bed, but it did, and there was a cave-in, by which 25 workmen lost their lives.

NEWEST THINGS

For the use of persons who have lost the use of their legs an easily-operated motor-driven wheeled chair has been invented.

The city of Lyon has opened a professional training school for the higher technical and scientific development of French women.

Stumps are converted into shavings by a new rotary cutting machine and the shavings are drawn into bags for removal by a vacuum.

Meat inspectors in Europe have found the motion picture camera useful in their work, enlarged photographs showing micro-organisms in motion if meat is diseased.

An automobile radiator has been placed within a flywheel by a Roumanian inventor, the water being cooled as it is whirled around.

Electrically-operated, a combined brush and vacuum machine has been invented for cleaning blackboard erasers.

Uruguay is to have a permanent electrical exposition at Montevideo to teach and extend the uses of electricity.

The metal cap of a new fruit jar is slightly convex, and by depressing the center the edges are sprung away from the jar.

Tubes made of glass have been invented in Europe for handling petroleum, gasoline and some gases in place of rubber tubing.

A VALUABLE TREE

Thirty thousand dollars was the sum recently offered an eastern Washington nursery company for an apple tree located near Lake Chelan. The proffer was made by a syndicate which desired to propagate the tree. It was turned down by the nursery company, which will develop the fruit itself. The tree is 20 years old and is called the Chelan. The fruit is golden yellow and is said to be different from that of any other apple grown in Washington. It is also said to possess exceptional keeping qualities, a box having been kept in storage in Spokane for two years without any marked deterioration. Twenty years ago, the story runs, an Indian planted a handful of apple seeds, three of which grew. The fruit of but one of the trees was good for anything. The tree is now of great size and a prolific bearer. At the National Apple Show at Spokane fruit from the tree took first prize for new varieties of apples.

A QUEER HOME

Near the little town of Garbe, Okla., in the heart of the wheat belt and among the finest country homes of the State, is a most unique residence. It was occupied for many years by one of the pioneer citizens of the State. Later this man, S. H. Peters, built a fine house on the spot, and the falling of a cement porch the other day exposed the former queer home. Under this porch was a cave. It is said that this cave was dug in 1894. At a point along a little ravine a sandstone ledge cropped out, and there Peters tunneled out and excavated two large rooms with a sandstone ledge about three feet thick for a roof. The rooms extended 60 feet under the ground, and at the deepest place there was about seven or eight feet of dirt on top. To the back room a skylight, three by nine feet, was opened. The rooms were plastered and white-coated, and the rock roof was whitewashed, making it light enough for one to read newspapers in any part of the cave. It was very dry at times, and groceries kept in the cave perfectly. Peters and his family lived there for a long time before he built a home above ground. The stovepipe ran up the skylight, and to persons passing along the road the smoke coming out of the ground was a novel sight. Hundreds of persons visited this cave home, and all wondered why the roof didn't fall in, as it was not supported by timbers. When the wet years came, a little spring in the cave, which furnished all the water for the family, overflowed the rooms at times, and in recent years, when the drain became clogged, the cave filled with water. It took Peters no longer to dig the cave than to build a sod house, like most of the pioneers used to do. The plaster was the only expense to the cave home.

TWELVE DAYS MISSING

Twelve days in the history of America are blank. If you should try to learn what happened in the period between September 3 and September 13, 1752, you will find no records, for those dates do not exist. Under the old style calendar, September 2, 1752, fell on a Wednesday. The next day the Gregorian or new style calendar was adopted by Great Britain and her American colonies, and the date set forward to September 14.

Up to this time the Julian calendar had been followed by the English speaking world. As reformed by Julius Cæsar in 46 B. C., it made the year consist of 365 days and six hours, with an extra day added to February each fourth year to account for the six hours. This was the most accurate calendar year yet devised, but it was 11 minutes and 14 seconds longer than the true solar year of 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds, amounting to a day in 128 years.

Pope Gregory XIII. corrected this about 1582 by dropping ten days from the calendar and ordaining that on the 100th year in three out of every four centuries the extra day for leap year should not be counted. Sixteen hundred was a leap year and 2000 will be one, but 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not. Even this calendar is 26 seconds too fast, amounting to a year in 3,323 years, so when 4000 comes around it will have to be robbed of its leap year day to correct this difference.

The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Catholic countries, including France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, in 1582, and within a short time by the Germans, Swiss and Hungarians, but not until 1752 by England and her great colonial empire.

If September of that year was counted a full month it surely caused joy among those whose pay was fixed on a monthly basis, but gloom when rent day came around. As to this the records are not at hand, but this wiping out of twelve days makes our setting up of the clock last spring seem a trivial matter.

WAR NEWS

Receipts of $16,431,933, July 9, from War Savings and Thrift Stamp sales were the largest of any single day since these securities were offered to the public. Sales during the first nine days of July totaled $46,552,529.

No matter what this war costs the government and the people of the United States in the way of money, it is going to be much cheaper to win this war than to lose it. The commercial and financial losses that would follow a German victory are not to be calculated. All that we spent would be lost, indemnities beyond calculation would have to be paid.

Nearly 5,000 returned soldiers, so much disabled that they could not return to their pre-war vocations, have been offered courses in industrial re-education by the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment of Canada, the experience of which organization has guided the United States War and Labor Departments and the Federal Vocational Board in similar work. The largest number of men to graduate from courses in any one month was 286, last June. The total number of graduates at that time had reached 767. Only 302 soldiers have refused to take the courses offered them, and only 442 have failed to complete them. Of the 442, many were released temporarily, to allow them to engage in summer work.

So important is the mining industry to the success of the war that, according to word which has reached the Department of Labor, the British government plans to return 10,000 miners to their work, releasing them from the army. These men entered the military service voluntarily or under the conscription act, but because of the urgent need of their services at home they will be sent back to the mines. Great Britain, according to some indications, is in danger of a coal shortage, and efforts are being made generally to speed up production. The output per man in England is not, from figures at present available, so good as in this country, where more coal has been mined than ever before, despite depletion of labor power through enlistment and the draft.

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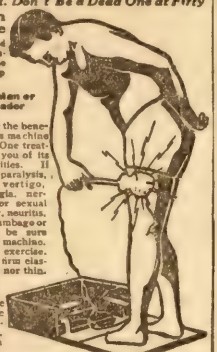

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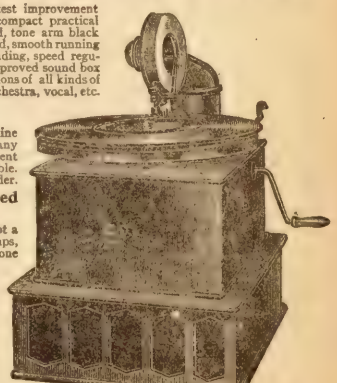

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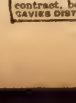

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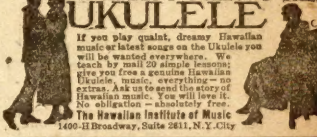

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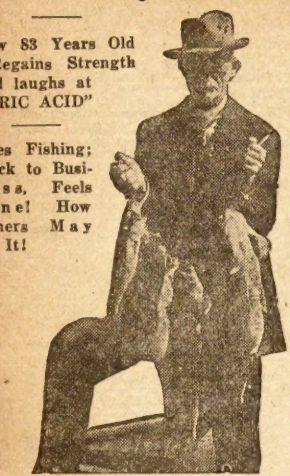

"I am eighty-three years old and I doctored for rheumatism ever since I came out of the army over fifty years ago. Like many others, I spent money freely for so-called 'cures,' and I have read about 'Uric Acid' until I could almost taste it. I could not sleep nights or walk without pain; my hands were so sore and stiff I could not hold a pen. But now I am again in active business and can walk with ease or write all day with comfort. Friends are surprised at the change."

HOW IT HAPPENED.

Mr. Asheiman is only one of thousands who suffered for years, owing to the general belief in the old, false theory that "Uric Acid" causes rheumatism. This erroneous belief induced him and legions of unfortunate men and women to take wrong treatments. You might just as well attempt to put out a fire with oil as to try and get rid of your rheumatism, neuritis and like complaints, by taking treatment supposed to drive Uric Acid out of your blood and body. Many physicians and scientists now know that Uric Acid never did, never can and never will cause rheumatism; that it is a natural and necessary constituent of the blood; that it is found in every new-born babe, and that without it we could not live!

HOW OTHERS MAY BENEFIT FROM A GENEROUS GIFT.

These statements may seem strange to some folks, because nearly all sufferers have all along been led to believe in the old "Uric Acid" humbug. It took Mr. Asheiman fifty years to find out this truth. He learned how to get rid of the true cause of his rheumatism, other disorders and recover his strength from "The Inner Mysteries," a remarkable book that is now being distributed free by an authority who devoted over twenty years to the scientific study of this particular trouble. If any reader of the "Mystery Magazine" wishes a copy of this book that reveals startling facts overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past, simply send a post-card or letter to H. P. Clearwater, 534-B Water Street, Hallowell, Maine, and it will be sent by return mail without any charge whatever. Send now. You may never get this opportunity again. If not a sufferer yourself, hand this good news to some friend who may be afflicted.

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To You, Miss or Mrs., About Your Hair

This is a plain talk of real importance to you because it is absolutely honest and the information is genuine.

You have been losing your hair. It comes out on the comb or brush. The steady loss, as well as the fact that your hair is becoming **thinner and weaker,** is worrying you.

You have tried different lotions, tonics, washes, etc., that were recommended or which you saw advertised. None of these have done you any good. They were not the right remedy for your hair.

Well, dear Madam, here is a message of good cheer. It comes from a man.

Years ago when I was almost entirely bald I came across an old Cherokee Indian who induced me to try his recipe for growing hair. He told me that the principle of this formula was used by all Indians, male and female, wherever they found a weed of it.

You know that Indian women (and men too) have long, beautiful hair.

So I tried the recipe. The compound was an ointment for the scalp. It had a bad odor and was rather nasty. But my hair grew—and has continued to grow. Since then I have never had any trouble with my hair. At the age of 66 I now possess an abundant growth and visit the barber each month to have it cut. Once, after an accident, when I was compelled to remain in the hospital for several weeks, it grew so long that it was like a woman's flourishing hair growth.

The recipe I obtained from the old Indian savant and it has been used by many others. I have had the formula modernized by a practical chemist so that the cosmetic ointment now has a more pleasant odor and is more agreeable to apply to the scalp and base of the hair.

It contains no alcohol nor any of those ingredients which tend to dry the hair, scalp and roots. On the contrary, it is a fertilizing compound. The Indian principle is that it must contain elements from the three natural Kingdoms. This rule is maintained in the recipe.

I want you to try this cosmetic on your scalp. It can be applied when retiring each night, only a few moments being required. It is likely you will find a very satisfactory result, right from the outset.

Now make no mistake; this is not a lovely scented preparation. There's nothing fancy about it. The name is Kotalko and you shall have the recipe free of cost by writing for it. Your druggist can supply the cosmetic according to the recipe; or you may obtain the compound from me, ready to use. Send me your name and address. The recipe will come free. If you would like a proof box of the cosmetic, enclose 25 cents, silver or stamps. My address is: John Hart Brittain. 150 East Thirty-second St., BD-101, New York, N. Y.

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GAINED OVER 30 POUNDS

"I smoked cigarettes ever since a boy. From six to eight sacks of tobacco I used weekly," states Mr. S. H. Ferguson.

Cigarettes were doing me great harm. I became so nervous that I couldn't sleep until I smoked. Each morning I had an awful taste in my mouth.

"Several times I tried to quit by willpower, but it just seemed that I would go wild if I couldn't have cigarettes.

"I had almost given up hope of ever quitting until one day I sent for a free book by Mr. Woods that told me what to do. After lear—ag the way, I quit easily in 3 days and haven't touched a cigarette in years. I have gained over 30 pounds and cannot praise the method too highly. I say to every cigarette smoker—if you can't quit without help get this book," so says Mr. Ferguson, of Crumps Park.

The foregoing remarks are like those of many other men who have been freed from the habit of smoking cigarettes, pipe or cigars or who have been chewing tobacco or dipping snuff excessively.

Write at once to Mr. Edw. J. Woods, WA-101, Station F, New York, N. Y., and get his book. It is free; postpaid to you. Cut this out and show others.

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